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ABSTRACT

The document, one in a series of four on women in American history, discusses the role of women in the Progressive Era (1890-1920). Designed to supplement high school U.S. history textbooks, the book is comprised of five chapters. Chapter I describes reformers and radicals including Jane Addams and Lillian Wald who began the settlement house movement; Florence Kelley, who fought for labor legislation; and Emma Goldman and Kate Richards O'Hare who became political prisoners for speaking against World War I. Chapter III focuses on women in factory work and the labor movement. Excerpts from diaries reflect the working conditions in factories which led to women's involvement in the AFL and the formation of the National Women's Trade Union League. Mother Jones, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the "Bread and Roses" strike (1912) of 25,000 textile workers in Massachusetts are also described. Chapters III and IV trace how women got the vote through the decades of struggle and argument, the slowing down of the suffrage movement, its revival by a younger generation, the militants and Alice Paul, and the work of Carrie Chapman Catt in ratifying the 19th Amendment. Chapter V is concerned with women in arts and letters during the Industrial Age: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ida Tarbell, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton, and Willa Cather. Women painters, photographers, composers, and dancers are also noted. (KC)

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Women in American History: A Series

Book Four

Women in the Progressive Era

1890 - 1920

by

Beverly Sanders

American Federation of Teachers

Women's Educational Equity Act Program

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
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CONTENTS

Introduction 1

1890 - 1920 3

I. Women in the Progressive Era:
Reformers and Radicals 5

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion 18

II. Women in Factory Work and the Labor Movement 19

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion 45

III. How Women Won the Vote
Part I. Decades of Struggle and Argument 47

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion 54

IV. How Women Won the Vote
Part II. Decade of Victory 55

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion 62

V. Women in Arts and Letters in the Industrial Age 63

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion 86

Bibliography 87

INTRODUCTION

Women in American History, a four-part series, attempts to fill a serious gap in the American history curriculum as taught in most United States high schools today. Surveys of the most widely used American history textbooks repeatedly turn up the astonishing fact that these books almost totally neglect the lives and achievements of American women. Although the revival of a feminist movement in the 1960's and 1970's has resulted in a proliferation of women's studies courses at the college level and a flood of books dealing with the history of women, very little of this material has been adapted to the secondary school level, except where individual teachers have initiated courses of their own.

During the year in which I developed the series--a process that included visiting several schools and testing the material in the classroom--I realized that the average social studies classroom was unaffected by the growing and much publicized interest in women's studies. The same standard textbooks were still being used, and no supplementary material on women seemed to be available. (It should be said that some of the publishers of the venerable textbooks are producing auxiliary pamphlets on American minority groups, among whom women are included, to supplement their standard fare.) When quizzed, few students were able to name more than one outstanding American woman who had lived before 1900. (Their response was usually Harriet Tubman; black studies has made its mark.) Most of the teachers I worked with were eager to integrate material on women into their American history courses and were grateful for whatever material I could put directly into the hands of their students. Other teachers were indifferent and would be unlikely to teach such material unless they were directed to do so. The students were usually very interested, particularly in material that presented women as fighters for social justice, such as that relating to the antislavery speakers of the 1830's. As might have been expected, women students showed greater interest and enthusiasm than men. Yet the latter, even when openly hostile to women's claims for historical recognition, seemed stimulated by the material and eager to engage in discussion.

Each book in the series is a narrative of women's lives and accomplishments within a significant epoch of American history--an epoch normally studied in the standard history survey. There are, naturally, chapters devoted to women who were famous in their time, although many of these women had been virtually forgotten until the recent revival of feminism. Often the more well-known figures were reformers--abolitionists, temperance workers, crusaders for the mentally ill, etc.--reform work being the one public arena open to women, who were virtually barred from politics before the 20th century. Others earned fame and fortune in literary work, since writing was traditionally one of the few professions that could be practiced at home. There is, of course, considerable attention devoted to the women--women's rights advocates, suffragists, educators--who dedicated their lives to achieving equality for women.

It would be distorting women's history, nowever, to concentrate exclusively on the famous and the exceptional. Throughout our nation's history, most women, conforming to widely held religious and social views of their role, have lived anonymous lives as wives, mothers and unsung workers. Therefore, I have tried to devote roughly equal space to the lives and accomplishments of these "ordinary" women, whose names were not well known, but whose experiences have, fortunately, been recorded in diaries, letters, newspaper pieces and other documents that have been preserved. I hope each book sufficiently stresses that women have always been a vital part of America's labor force. On farms and in factories, women were there from the start: exploited and invisible, but making the wheels go round. Though the important economic role of women seems obvious, it was not always fully recognized and valued, especially during eras when it was popular to view the ideal woman as a nonworker, except for domestic chores. For each epoch, I have tried to show what conditions--economic, political, social and legal--advanced women toward equality with men or retarded their progress in that direction.

Although my intention was to produce a historical narrative and not a collection of documents, I have tried to include ample selections from primary sources whenever that seemed the best way to capture the flavor of certain periods and personalities. In my view, most secondary school textbooks offer too small a taste of primary sources, no doubt because the vocabulary and writing style of our 17th, 18th and 19th century ancestors are considered too difficult for the teenaged reader of today. To the contrary, I have found from my experiments with these materials that students will respond to authenticity when they find it, even if the language is difficult. Even slow readers will struggle through the rhetoric of an Angelina Grimke once they sense the woman's power and pas-passionate devotion to an ideal of justice.

It has been noted that women's history generally falls into the increasingly popular disciplines of social and economic history, rather than the more traditional categories of political, diplomatic and military history. I would hope that exposure to the history of American women might awaken in high school students--male and female alike--an awareness that social and economic history exists and that it can have meaning for their lives. The emphasis in women's history on how people live and work might cause students to realize that history is about people like themselves--that their own lives, however obscure, contain the very stuff of history. The themes of women's history have, in my view, the potential for stimulating students' interest in history and for enriching and humanizing what for many young people might otherwise be a remote and abstract field of study.

1890 - 1920

By 1890, the outlines of 20th century America were taking shape. A rural, small-town nation was being transformed into an urban industrial one. Many ingredients were at work in this transformation: the development of the railroads and the closing of the frontier; the rapid growth of industry; the arrival, starting in the 1880's, of millions of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, providing industry with a cheap labor force and giving rise to crowded city slums. American industries, particularly those organized into giant corporations, trusts and holding companies, were generating unprecedented wealth, but that wealth was unevenly distributed throughout society. The gap between rich and poor was greater than it had ever been in America. In 1900, for example, an industrialist like Andrew Carnegie was earning a personal income--with no income taxes--of approximately $23 million, while the average yearly wage of all American workers was roughly $500. American millionaires lived in mansions that resembled European palaces, while a few city blocks away from these lavish dwellings other Americans, most of them new immigrants, lived in filthy, crumbling tenement buildings, without adequate heat or plumbing, along streets and alleys strewn with garbage.

The industrial labor force consisted of men, women and children working long hours for low pay under frequently dangerous and unsanitary conditions. Labor organizations were weak and viewed by many employers as criminal conspiracies, and a majority of workers, in particular the unskilled, were still unorganized. Attempts by working people to improve conditions often erupted into violence, the most notable examples being the Haymarket riots in Chicago in 1886, and the Pullman strike in 1894. Government on all levels was sympathetic to business interests, and, for the most part, left business to regulate itself. The growing cities were controlled by political machines run by "bosses"--professional politicians who made profitable deals with business leaders, and who commanded the loyalty of the immigrant voters by doling out favors, jobs and services.

Many urban Americans were troubled by the misery spawned by the economic system, the power of the industrialists and bankers (the plutocrats) and the ineffectiveness and corruption of government. Beginning in the 1890's they generated a many-sided reform movement--Progressivism--that after 1900 became a nationwide political movement. Most of the reformers were native-born, middle class and college educated. Many were professionals, and came from families belonging to an older elite of money or political power that was now being displaced by the new industrialists and financiers.

CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA: REFORMERS AND RADICALS

There were a striking number of women among the reformers of the Progressive Era. Indeed, one of them, Jane Addams, came to virtually embody the humanitarian spirit of the time. The women reformers belonged, for the most part, to the first generation of college-educated women, and were to some degree rebelling against the restricted, sheltered role of the 19th century middle-class "lady." They were especially concerned with the plight of the urban poor, particularly the immigrant women and children, and they founded institutions and organizations designed to improve the living and working conditions of the poor and to bridge the gap between social classes.

Historians writing about these women reformers have called them social feminists: feminists because they were concerned about finding a rewarding and significant role for themselves as women, and because they often acted out of a sense of female solidarity; social because they wanted to make society more responsive to the needs of the unfortunate. They allied themselves with the women's suffrage movement, but they tended to regard the alleviation of human suffering as a higher priority than women's rights. They saw the vote chiefly as a means of realizing their social goals.

THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE MOVEMENT

The most characteristic, as well as enduring, reform institution of the social feminists was the settlement house. Although they were preceded by an English model, London's Toynbee Hall, the American settlement houses, especially those shaped by such women as Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, became unique, and in some ways feminine institutions.

Jane Addams and Hull-House

Jane Addams (1860-1935) grew up in the town of Cedarville, Illinois. She was the daughter of a prosperous miller of Quaker stock, who served as a state senator and had been an abolitionist and a friend of Abraham Lincoln. Jane Addams' father and Lincoln were her childhood idols, the first teaching her the importance of being totally honest with oneself, the latter inspiring her with his faith in the people and his "marvelous power to retain and utilize past experience." She was a graduate of the Rockford (Illinois) Seminary, where, true to her father's advice, she resisted the efforts of the head of the school to turn her into a missionary. Ethical and religious matters stirred her during her college years, but they were not to be resolved by choosing a career as a missionary. She had to find her own way.

According to Jane Addams' autobiography, Twenty Years at Hull-House (1910), the eight years after college before she found her life's work were a

frustrating period of religious doubts and intellectual confusion, punctuated by physical illness and mental depression. Dissatisfied with the role of well-bred young lady--devoted to the family circle and to culture, the role approved by her fashionable stepmother--Jane Addams sought through travel and study a larger, more socially useful role to play. Reflecting on this trying period in later life she wrote:

> It is always difficult for the family to regard the daughter otherwise than as a family possession. From her babyhood she has been the charm and grace of the household and it is hard to think of her as an integral part of the social order, hard to believe that she has duties outside of the family, to the state and to society in the larger sense.[1]

At first Addams tried medical study, but gave it up after bouts of ill health. She then made two extended trips to Europe, visiting museums, studying art and, more important, observing the life of the poor in European cities. The misery she observed made her feel uneasy about the pursuit of culture, what she called "the snare of preparation," and caused her to reflect on the problems of the educated woman:

> For two years in the midst of my distress over the poverty...there was mingled a sense of futility, of misdirected energy, the belief that the pursuit of cultivation would not in the end bring either solace or relief. I gradually reached a conviction that the first generation of college women had taken their learning too quickly, had departed too suddenly from the active emotional life led by their grandmothers and great-grandmothers that the contemporary education of young women had developed too exclusively the power of acquiring knowledge and of merely receiving impressions; that somewhere in the process of "being educated" they had lost that simple and almost automatic response to the human appeal, that old healthful reaction resulting in activity from the mere presence of suffering or of helplessness.[2]

Young women like herself needed an outlet for their creative energies and a plan for such an outlet was taking shape in her mind:

> I gradually became convinced that it would be a good thing to rent a house in a part of the city where many primitive and actual needs are found, in which young women who had been given over too exclusively to study might restore a balance of activity along traditional lines and learn of life from life itself.[3]

The turning point for Jane Addams came after she attended a bullfight in Madrid. Carried away by the colorful spectacle, she had watched "with

comparative indifference, five bulls and many more horses killed." She was overwhelmed with self-disgust both for enjoying the bullfight and "for going on indefinitely with study and travel." The very next day she confided to her friend Ellen Gates Starr that they carry out the plan of finding a house in a poor neighborhood and Miss Starr was enthusiastic. On the way back to the United States, Jane Addams visited Toynbee Hall in London, one of the first English settlement houses.

Back in Chicago in 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr found the house they were looking for--the rundown Hull mansion--on the corner of Polk and Halstead Streets in a neighborhood densely inhabited by Russian, German, Italian and Greek immigrants, who now made up a majority of Chicago's population. Although the mansion had once stood in the suburbs, the city had "grown up around it." "The streets," wrote Jand Addams, were "inexpressibly dirty, the number of schools inadequate, the paving miserable and altogether lacking in the alleys and smaller streets, and the stables foul beyond description." In September the two women moved into Hull-House and promptly made themselves at home to their neighbors. "Probably no young matron ever placed her own things in her own house with more pleasure than that with which we first furnished Hull-House," wrote Addams.

From the beginning, the two women sought to respond to the needs of the people they were living among. But, Jane Addams insisted time and again in her writings on the settlement house, she and her fellow residents were not giving charity. They were gaining more than they gave by having the means of translating idealistic thoughts and theories into practical action.

The Hull-House women first offered culture to their neighbors--a reading party. Before long they added a kindergarten class, recognizing the need of working women for a place to leave their children.

> From the first it seemed understood that we were ready to perform the humblest neighborhood services. We were asked to wash the newborn babies, and to prepare the dead for burial, to nurse the sick and to "mind the children."[4]

In those first days they sheltered an unwanted baby, were midwives for the mother of an illegitimate child and took in a teenaged bride beaten by her husband. By 1893, Hull-House was a thriving community center, with clubs for people of all ages, a kindergarten and day nursey, cooking and sewing classes, a gym and a residence for working women. Eventually, as public interest in Hull-House grew and contributions began to flow in from wealthy patrons, an art gallery, theater and music school were added, as well as new buildings.

Jane Addams and the other Hull-House residents quickly realized that these cultural activities and services, worthy as they were, could not begin

to attack the deep-rooted problems of the poor. Their close contacts with their neighbors brought them face to face with the grim realities of factory conditions, child labor, inadequate sanitation and wretched housing. It was always a concrete situation that made them aware of a general problem. In the following passage, for example, Jane Addams describes how the Hull-House people were first awakened to the realities of child labor:

> Our very first Christmas at Hull-House, when we as yet knew nothing of child labor, a number of little girls refused the candy which was offered them as part of the Christmas good cheer, saying simply that they "worked in a candy factory and could not bear the sight of it." We discovered that for six weeks they had worked from seven in the morning until nine at night, and they were exhausted as well as satiated. The sharp consciousness of stern economic conditions was thus thrust upon us in the midst of the season of good will.[5]

The residents, some of whom had university training in the social sciences, realized that more than general impressions of neighborhood conditions were needed if they were to change peoples' lives. They therefore undertook fact-gathering expeditions to record what housing and factory conditions were really like, in order to have valid evidence that could be used to influence legislators or the general public. In 1895 these pioneer studies, which were among the first scientific studies of social conditions, were collected and published in a volume called Hull-House Maps and Papers.

Like the American philosopher John Dewey, who spent some time at Hull-House, Jane Addams believed in learning by doing--in turning democratic ideals into practical action. For example, once she was convinced that the high death rate in the 19th ward (the Hull-House district) was directly connected to the heaps of garbage piling up in the alleys, Addams got herself appointed garbage inspector and rose at six in the morning to see that the garbage collectors were at work and to follow them on their rounds. She discovered that "many of the foreign born women of the ward were shocked by this abrupt departure into the ways of men." And she hoped to convince her neighbors that their "housewifely duties logically extended to the adjacent alleys and streets." Her concern for the many problems of the 19th ward inevitably drew her into municipal politics. Hull-House made a long but unsuccessful attempt to unseat a corrupt alderman who held sway over his constituents through favors and patronage. Jane Addams became an ardent supporter of women's suffrage, developing the argument that in the modern city, where people are so interdependent, women needed to become involved in the problems that lay outside their households, if only to safeguard their families more effectively. In a society rife with industrial problems, she argued, women had an important role to play as "social housekeepers." She eventually endorsed the Progressive Party and campaigned for Theodore Roosevelt when he was presidential candidate in 1912.

The settlement house was an idea whose time had come. By 1895 there were more than fifty such places in large cities all over America, most of

them springing up independent of one other. Chicago had Mary McDowell's Chicago Settlement as well as Hull-House. Black women, particularly those active in the women's club movement, founded settlement houses to meet the needs of the black community. In 1890 Janie Porter Barett (1865-1948) founded the Locust Street Social Settlement in Hampton, Virginia. Staffed mostly by Hampton students--Mrs. Barrett was a Hampton graduate--the settlement was well equipped to provide instruction in farming, cooking and child care. Ida Wells-Barnett, club activist and antilynching crusader, recognizing the problems of black men arriving in Chicago from the South, helped found the Negro Fellowship League in 1910 to give these men a home away from home. In New York the Henry Street Settlement was the best known, and its founder, Lillian Wald, was regarded in her time as comparable in stature to Jane Addams.

Lillian Wald and the Nurses' Settlement

Lillian Wald (1867-1940) came from a prosperous German-Jewish family in Rochester. She enjoyed a childhood so pleasant and secure that she claimed, in later life, to have been a "spoiled child." She received a good education, although when she applied to Vassar College at the age of sixteen she was refused for being too young. After spending several pleasant years as a society woman, she wrote, in 1889, "I feel the need of serious definite work." That year she entered the training school for nurses of the New York Hospital. For a year after graduation, she worked--unhappily--as a nurse in an orphan asylum where the children were badly treated. In 1893, while enrolled for further study in the Woman's Medical College of New York, Wald organized home nursing classes for immigrant women of the Lower East Side. One day a child called her away from class, begging her to tend to her mother, who lay sick in a tenement building on the east side. Lillian Wald found a family of seven, plus several boarders, living in two rooms. That very night she decided to move to the Lower East Side and become a public health nurse.

With a friend and fellow nurse, Mary Brewster, Wald moved into the top floor of a tenement building and the women made themselves available to their neighbors as nurses and friends. They immediately had their hands full caring for children with bowel complaints, vermin bites and infectious diseases of all kinds and for women suffering infections connected with childbirth. The two nurses frequently stayed all night with patients who were too frightened or too sick to go to the hospital.

Since they charged low fees, or no fees at all, depending on the patient's ability to pay, the nurses needed financial support, and they soon received it--generously--from Jacob Schiff, a banker and philanthropist. By 1895, when the tenement apartment was proving too small for the many services they were providing, Lillian Wald found a small building on Henry Street and established the "Nurses' Settlement" (later changed to the Henry Street Settlement), beginning with eleven residents, nine of them trained nurses. It was Lillian Wald's view that there were many persons, particularly in needy neighborhoods, who required health care at home without being sick enough to warrant a hospital stay. Such care, she decided, could be provided by the visiting nurses' service. Thus the field of public health nursing was born and quickly spread to different parts of the United States.

Wald persuaded the New York City Board of Health to establish the first public school nursing program in the country, and also initiated other kinds of nursing programs. Meanwhile, the Henry Street Settlement, like Hull-House, soon became a neighborhood community center providing cultural and recreational activities in addition to the nursing services. Lillian Wald was especially concerned about the needs of children. On their behalf she campaigned to build more parks and playgrounds, was actively involved in the movement to abolish child labor and was an influence in the founding of the federal Children's Bureau under the Department of Labor.

Both Jane Addams and Lillian Wald had an extraordinary talent for attracting gifted people to the cause of social justice. Many veterans of the settlement houses, like Florence Kelley, Julia Lathrop and Alice Hamilton, to name a few, became distinguished pioneers in social work, labor legislation and industrial medicine.

Florence Kelley, the Consumers' League and Labor Legislation

Florence Kelley (1859-1932), who spent time as a resident at both Hull-House and Henry Street, was of a more fiery temperament than either Jane Addams or Lillian Wald, both of whom presented public images of gentleness and serenity. Kelley was, in the words of her co-workers, "an impatient crusader, no gentle saint," unafraid to hurt people's feelings if her cherished goals were at stake.

The daughter of a Philadelphia congressman, Kelley was encouraged by her father, a believer in women's suffrage, to get a college education. After receiving her bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1882, and being refused, because of her sex, admittance to a graduate school where she had planned to study law, she went to Europe and studied at the university in Zurich, Switzerland, the first European university to enroll women. It was there that she became interested in the problems of workers and, like many of her fellow students, she became a socialist. She also married and bore three children. Several years later, after her return to America, she was divorced from her husband and granted custody of her children; she resumed her maiden name.

By the time Florence Kelley became a Hull-House resident in 1891, her overwhelming concern was to secure legislation protecting women and children in industry, and she aroused in the Hull-House group a strong interest in industrial conditions. In 1892, the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, at Kelley's prodding, hired her to investigate the "sweatshops" of the garment industry. When the Illinois legislature in the following year passed a factory act prohibiting child labor, curtailing the working hours of women and setting standards for sweatshops, Governor Altgeld appointed Kelley the chief factory inspector. Her official reports as factory inspector were filled with vivid details and conveyed a passionate sense of outrage. She wanted the public and the legislators to face the full horrors of child labor. Thus, describing small boys at work in the Chicago slaughterhouses, she wrote:

> Some of the children are boys who cut up the animals as soon as the hide is removed, little butchers working directly in the slaughterhouse, at the most revolting part of the labor performed in the stockyards. These children stand, ankle deep, in water used for flooding the floor for the purpose of carrying off blood and refuse into the drains; they breathe air so sickening that a man not accustomed to it can stay in the place but a few minutes; and their work is the most brutalizing that can be devised.[6]

Although Florence Kelley called herself a socialist, she was too impatient with social evils to wait for the long-range transformation of the capitalist system envisioned by socialists. She was ready to work within the system for limited reform goals. Indeed, most of her energies were spent in a tireless crusade to have laws enacted abolishing child labor and protecting women in the work place by limiting hours and setting wages and working conditions. The organization which became the vehicle for her crusade was the National Consumers' League. She became its general secretary in 1899 and held the office until her death. Founded in 1891 by a wealthy reformer, Josephine Shaw Lowell, the Consumers' League sought to bring the pressure of consumers--mostly women--to bear on store owners and manufacturers to assure that goods were manufactured and sold under humane conditions. Women from the League would investigate working conditions in retail stores, taking into account wages, hours, sanitary facilities, seats for the workers and the employment of children. Stores meeting the standards set up by the League would be put on a "White List" and the public encouraged to buy from them.

Florence Kelley enjoyed a significant moment of success in her goal to enact protective legislation with the Muller v. Oregon case (1908) before the Supreme Court. In Oregon a launderer, Curt Muller, had violated a state law prohibiting women in laundries from working more than ten hours a day. When Muller lost his case and appealed to the Supreme Court, Kelley urged attorney (not yet justice) Louis Brandeis to present arguments prepared by the Consumers' League. When Brandeis agreed, Kelley and her assistants dug up all available facts on the physical and mental effects of fatigue on women, which then became part of the "Brandeis brief," a new legal defense of labor legislation. The Supreme Court upheld the validity of protective laws, and as a result of the case similar laws were passed in a number of states.

Another moment of triumph for Florence Kelley came in 1912 when Congress created the Children's Bureau, with Julia Lathrop of Hull-House as its director. Kelley did everything she could to publicize the work of the Bureau. To her great disappointment, however, many of the protective laws passed but were subsequently struck down by the courts, and her campaign to have a child labor amendment to the Constitution was unsuccessful.

Though in her lifetime Florence Kelley failed to achieve the far-reaching social legislation she worked for, she succeeded in influencing those who would do so in the future. As secretary of the Consumers' League, Kelley had

traveled thousands of miles organizing chapters and giving lectures to women's clubs and college groups. During a speech at Mt. Holyoke College, her dramatic personality made a powerful impression on a serious young woman named Frances Perkins, who later claimed that Kelley's talk "first opened my mind to the necessity for and the possibility of the work which became my vocation."[7] Under Kelley's guidance in the Consumers' League, Frances Perkins became an expert factory inspector, and eventually served as industrial commissioner of New York under Governors Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt. When the latter was elected President in 1932, the year of Florence Kelley's death, he appointed Perkins Secretary of Labor, the first woman to hold a cabinet post. As the major force behind both the social security act and the minimum wage law, the most enduring of the social programs of the New Deal, Perkins extended the ideals of Florence Kelley beyond the Progressive Era to influence the lives of working people in our own time.

RADICAL RESPONSES

Emma Goldman

Some critics of American society at the turn of the century were seeking revolutionary change and viewed the reformers as well meaning, but ineffective. Emma Goldman (1869-1940), America's best-known anarchist, gave her impression of the women at the Henry Street Settlement in her autobiography, Living My Life:

> Miss Lillian Wald, Lavinia Dock, and Miss MacDowell were among the first American women I met who felt an interest in the economic condition of the masses. They were genuinely concerned with the people of the East Side. My contact with them...brought me close to new American types, men and women of ideals, capable of fine, generous deeds. Like some of the Russian revolutionists they, too, had come from wealthy homes and had completely consecrated themselves to what they considered a great cause. Yet their work seemed palliative to me. "Teaching the poor to eat with a fork is all very well," I once said...; "but what good does it do if they have not the food?"[8]

Emma Goldman wanted the poor--the workers and the unemployed--to organize among themselves to get their food and not wait for social workers to give it to them.

A Russian-Jewish immigrant, Emma Goldman arrived in America in 1885 when she was sixteen years old. Her early experiences working in a clothing factory in Rochester, New York, soon turned her into a critic of the capitalist system. It was a time when socialists and anarchists spoke on street corners and in meeting halls, trying to arouse the workers. Several events--public and

personal--caused Goldman, rebellious by nature, to become an anarchist: the death sentences in 1887 of six anarchists after the Haymarket riots in Chicago, and her meeting in New York City with Johann Most, a leading anarchist, and Alexander Berkman, a young Russian immigrant of revolutionary ideas.

On the question of revolutionary violence, Emma Goldman initially believed that the ends justified the means--that individual acts of violence were acceptable in order to bring about needed social change. She eventually repudiated this position, but she believed in it when she helped prepare her comrade Alexander Berkman to assassinate the industrialist Henry Clay Frick for having hired Pinkerton guards to do battle with locked-out steelworkers in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Frick was wounded, but survived the assassination attempt; and for his revolutionary gesture, the twenty-two-year-old Berkman went to prison, where he served fourteen of a twenty-two-year sentence, much of it in solitary confinement. After this disaster, Emma Goldman was publicly associated with violence. Thus, in 1901, when a disturbed young man claiming to be an anarchist assassinated President McKinley, police and government officials tried to implicate her, although no evidence was ever found linking her to the deed.

In 1893, during a period of severe economic crisis, Emma Goldman delivered a fiery speech to a crowd of unemployed workers in New York's Union Square. The speech, as she recalled it, expressed her uncompromising opposition to government and to the capitalist system:

> "Men and women," I began amidst sudden silence, "do you not realize that the State is the worst enemy you have? It is a machine that crushes you in order to sustain the ruling class, your masters...the labor politicians make common cause with your enemies to keep you in leash, to prevent your direct action. The State is the pillar of capitalism, and it is ridiculous to expect any redress from it...You, too, will have to learn that you have a right to share your neighbour's bread. Your neighbours--they have not only stolen your bread, but they are sapping your blood. They will go on robbing you, your children, and your children's children, unless you wake up, unless you become daring enough to demand your rights. Well, then, demonstrate before the palaces of the rich; demand work. If they do not give you work demand bread. If they deny you both, take bread. It is your sacred right!"
>
> Uproarious applause, wild and deafening, broke from the stillness like a sudden storm. The sea of hands eagerly stretching out towards me seemed like the wings of white birds fluttering.[9]

As a result of this speech, she was arrested, found guilty of inciting to riot, and sentenced to a year in prison, which she served on Blackwell's Island in New York City's East River.

During the first two decades of the 20th century, Emma Goldman made her mark not so much as a radical political leader, but as a dramatic public speaker and an ardent champion of free speech. She traveled endlessly throughout the country lecturing on a variety of controversial subjects: anarchism, the new dramas of Ibsen and Shaw, women's emancipation and birth control. In many communities the local police force and vigilante groups tried to prevent her from speaking, but she always persisted, with the result that people concerned about free speech usually insisted that she be given a hearing. She also expressed her views in her own magazine, called Mother Earth, and in various pamphlets. It was above all in her free-speech fights that Emma Goldman helped to build a bridge from immigrant radicalism to a native American tradition of dissent.

In her ideas about women's role in society, Goldman also stood apart from most other prominent women of the day--the reformers and the suffragists. She attacked the institution of marriage, regarding it as a parasitic relationship based on property, resulting in the economic dependence of women. Other women, such as the noted feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, agreed with her on that score. But Goldman was also critical of the so-called "emancipated woman." She thought that this new breed of college-educated and professional women was in danger of losing their feelings as women and was too eager to exclude love and sex from their lives.

> True, the movement for woman's rights has broken many old fetters, but it has also forged new ones. The great movement of true emancipation has not met with a great race of women who could look liberty in the face. Their narrow, Puritanical vision banished man, as a disturber and doubtful character, out of their emotional life.[10]

Possibly one of the most emancipated women of her day, Emma Goldman lived her life freely without regard for conventional morality. After an unfortunate early marriage that ended in divorce, her relationships with men were freely entered into and ended without rancor. Those who knew her generally appreciated her capacity for love and friendship; to the traditional minded, she was the very embodiment of sin.

Emma Goldman regarded women's suffrage as a mere "fetish," a symbol without meaning or use. She ridiculed the claim that women's participation would "purify" politics, arguing that systems of political power, by their very nature, were not capable of being purified. She pointed out that in the countries and in the parts of the United States where women already had the vote, things were no better.

This woman, whom the press dubbed "Red Emma" and depicted in cartoons as a wild-eyed fanatic, was in person a plump, soft-spoken woman, with "very expressive blue-gray eyes" and a slight accent. Contemporaries who wrote of her stressed her motherly appearance and manner even if they disagreed

with her political ideas. The socialist Kate Richards O'Hare found herself spending time in prison with Goldman when the two were jailed for opposing the draft during world War I; O'Hare described her as "the tender cosmic mother" lavishing affection on the other prisoners, all of whom adored her.

Ever since the assassination of McKinley, when Emma Goldman had, at great risk to herself, defended the rights of the assassin Leon Czolgosz to a fair trial, the government never ceased to regard her as a public enemy. Immigration officials began a persistent, though devious, campaign to deprive her of her citizenship and deport her. In 1908. her citizenship was withdrawn as a result of denaturalization proceedings conducted against her former husband, who had disappeared. After American entry into World War I, Emma Goldman and her friend Alexander Berkman (now out of prison) were arrested and jailed for urging young men to resist the draft. Caught up in the war hysteria, Congress passed laws making it easier for the government to deport "undesirable" aliens. Those critical of the government in wartime, such as Emma Goldman, were a prime target for these new laws. Zealous immigration officials, including a young J. Edgar Hoover, finally succeeded in their campaign against her. On December 21, 1919, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and over 200 other victims of the "Red Scare" sailed "back past the Statue of Liberty" on their way to Soviet Russia.

Kate Richards O'Hare

Kate Richards O'Hare (1877-1948), who was a political prisoner along with Emma Goldman for her opposition to American participation in World War I, was America's leading woman socialist, a home-grown radical. A native of Kansas, Kate Richards early experienced economic disaster when her father's farm failed because of drought and he was forced to look for city work. While still in her teens, she worked as an apprentice in a machinists' shop and even joined the machinists' union. Her first exposure to socialist ideas kindled her ardent religious nature, which had turned away from the religion of her childhood. She was an active member, along with her husband, Francis O'Hare, in the lively but divided and weak Socialist Party of America headed by Eugene Victor Debs. During the early 1900's, the O'Hares held revival-type meetings, or "encampments," throughout the Great Plains--Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri--and had considerable success attracting discontented farmers to socialism. She wrote socialist propaganda, including a novel and, with her husband, edited a weekly socialist journal.

Kate O'Hare favored women's suffrage and in 1910 she ran for Congress on the Socialist ticket in Kansas. However, she insisted in her speeches that she believed in the traditional division of roles between men and women. Women were needed to fight in the struggle for a most just society, she believed, but once the socialist vision had been achieved women could return to domestic life. Like most American socialists, she opposed American entry into World War I and her active vocal opposition to the war caused her to be indicted under the Espionage Act.

After spending over a year in prison during 1919-20, where she had her memorable encounter with Emma Goldman (her five-year sentence was commuted and she was later pardoned), Kate O'Hare worked actively for the release of other political prisoners. As a result of her prison experiences, O'Hare wrote a blistering attack on conditions within the Jefferson City, Missouri, prison. She gradually abandoned the radicalism of her earlier years, and devoted herself to the single goal of prison reform. During the 1930's and 1940's she played an important role in transforming California's prison system into one of the most advanced in the country.

CONCLUSION: THE IMAGE OF WOMAN IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

The outstanding public achievements of American women in the period between 1890 and 1920 represented both a break with the limited domestic role of the 19th century middle-class woman, as well as a certain continuity with it. Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, Lillian Wald and many others were living proof that women had the ability to be executives, professionals and political activists. They found meaningful lives for themselves by founding institutions and organizations through which to combat social injustice. Most of their activities met with widespread public acceptance. Masses of middle-class women everywhere became interested in social reform. The women's clubs, which had started out as cultural societies in the 1880's, grew dramatically around the turn of the century, and became more concerned with social welfare than with the arts. Women reformers found themselves in step with a nationwide political movement--Progressivism--and their social goals, including the demand for suffrage, became part of the Progressive agenda.

Yet even the most outstanding women of the period did not break away completely from the 19th century maternal stereotype. In many respects they used its terms to justify their activities. The settlement house women, despite their scientific approach to social problems, were basically mothers to the immigrants in the slums, attempting to shield them from the worst excesses of the industrial system. The women who became expert lobbyists and who were appointed to public posts as factory inspectors, heads of the Children's and Women's Bureaus, and industrial commissioners were confined to the field of social welfare: more social housekeeping. Even the radicals worked with an elevated concept of motherhood. Anarchist Emma Goldman named her magazine Mother Earth and frequently expressed the hope that in a better-ordered world women would be free to express their loving feminine traits as fully as their intellectual ones. "I would find an outlet for my mother-need," she wrote in her autobiography, "in the love of all children." Kate Richards O'Hare believed that in a socialist reorganization of society men and women would return to their traditional places--that is, with women in the home.

Except for the area of social welfare, American women were still politically impotent. That they had no power when it came to the issue of peace and war became evident with the outbreak of World War I. The efforts of prominent American women such as Jane Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt, the

leader of the National Woman Suffrage Association, to become mediators between the warring nations were a failure. Once America's most beloved woman, Addams was widely condemned for her opposition to the war. Never abandoning her pacifist principles, she worked during the war to increase food production to help those left starving by the conflict; indeed, Addams was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 in international recognition of her adherence to pacifist ideals. The more pragmatic Carrie Chapman Catt realized that women's support for the war effort would greatly improve the chances for the passage of a suffrage amendment to the Constitution. Radicals like Emma Goldman, Kate O'Hare and others of similar political ideas went to jail for their efforts to oppose the war. The majority of American women, like a majority of men, supported the government in the war effort and condemned antiwar activity as unpatriotic.

NOTES

1. Gail Parker, ed., *The Oven Birds: American Women on Womanhood 1820-1920* (paperback, New York, 1972) p. 308. Excerpt is from Jane Addams, "Filial Relations," in *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York, 1907).

2. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910; paperback ed., New York, 1961) pp. 64, 72, 78, 88, 148.

3. Ibid., p. 148.

4. Ibid., p. 148.

5. Ibid., p. 148.

6. Josephine Goldmark, *Impatient Crusader: Florence Kelley's Life Story* (Urbana, Illinois, 1953) pp. 36-41.

7. George Martin, *Madam Secretary: Frances Perkins* (Boston, 1976) p. 52.

8. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, in two volumes (1931; paperback reprint ed., New York, 1970) Vol. I, p. 160.

9. Ibid., pp. 122-123.

10. Emma Goldman, "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation," *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1917; paperback reprint ed., New York, 1969) p. 219.

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion

1. Read the passages from Jane Addams, p. 6. Why were the years after college a period of emotional turmoil and discontent for her? Do you think that young people today--especially young women--suffer from the same problems? Do many young people today have the same desire to perform socially useful work?

2. Jane Addams and other educated middle-class men and women did not regard settlement-house work as charity for the poor. They believed that such work helped them to "learn of life from life itself" and gave them the satisfaction of putting democratic ideas into practice. Is it possible to bridge the gap between social classes by reform work? How is this done today?

3. In what sense were the settlement houses, especially as represented by Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, feminine institutions, even though men participated in their activities?

4. The term social housekeeper has been used to describe the women reformers of the Progressive Era. In what ways did women like Jane Addams, Lillian Wald, Julia Lathrop and Florence Kelley make municipal and state politics into an appropriate part of "women's sphere"?

5. Discuss the role of Florence Kelley and the Consumers' League in securing legislation favorable to store and factory workers.

6. Read the passage from Emma Goldman's speech, p. 13. Compare the approach of reformers like Jane Addams, Florence Kelley and Lillian Wald to the problems of urban poverty and social injustice with that of a radical like Emma Goldman.

Optional Activity

Write an essay on the life and career of one of the prominent women reformers mentioned in this chapter. What caused the woman in question to devote her life to reform work or radical movements? What were her major contributions?

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN FACTORY WORK AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

By 1890, women were a significant part of America's industrial labor force. Approximately one million women worked in factories, making up at least half the workers in the textile mills and tobacco factories and outnumbering men in garment manufacturing. They were to be found in shoemaking, food processing and packaging and a variety of light industries, as well as in a number of heavy industries--foundries, tin plate mills, print shops--generally thought of as "masculine."

Women and men in the same industry seldom did the same work. Women usually learned on the job in a casual manner and seldom had the opportunity for apprenticeship in the skilled areas of their trades. Even when women held jobs requiring skill and training, they made one-half the earnings of nonunion men doing the same work and one-third the earnings of union men.

The female factory worker was usually young--between 16 and 26--single, white, and an immigrant or the child of immigrants. (Few black women or men were able to get factory jobs except in laundries.) Sometimes she was self-supporting, but more frequently her wages were contributing to the support of her family. The married women who worked usually did so because their husbands' wages were inadequate, not out of a desire for economic independence. Not surprising, widows were to be found among factory workers. Most young working women dreamed of marriage as an escape from factory work, but when marriage did not bring economic security, they often found themselves right back at the factory bench.

TRUE STORIES OF FACTORY LIFE

Beginning in the 1890's, the generally wretched conditions in the sweatshops and mills where women and children worked began to attract the attention of reformers, state legislatures and "muckraking" writers. Factory inspectors and investigators like Florence Kelley and others presented a shocked public with documented evidence of the unhealthful and dangerous conditions that factory workers endured for long hours and low pay. For example, women who spun linen thread in Paterson, New Jersey, mills stood year-round on a stone floor in water, with a spray of water constantly hitting them on the chest. Women and children who breathed in the moist, lint-filled air of Southern cotton mills spit so frequently that "the floors were slimy with a mixture of sputum and tobacco juice."[1] And those working in the manufacture of tobacco, cleaning fluids, and paint constantly inhaled dangerous fumes. Workers in these industries were susceptible to tuberculosis, pneumonia and other respiratory diseases. The

hands of women in the shoe industry were stained and rotted by contact with dyes and glue, while artificial flower makers disfigured their fingers handling hot irons. Most horrifying, the women who worked in match factories were in danger of having their jaws rot away from over-exposure to phosphorus.

A number of middle-class women, curious to know the reality of factory life, disguised themselves as working women, obtained a series of factory jobs and wrote about their experiences afterward. Two such women--Bessie Van Vorst and her sister-in-law, Marie Van Vorst--wanted to share the working woman's burden, and find remedies for her problems. Under an assumed name, Bessie Van Vorst found a job in a pickle factory in Pittsburgh. Stuffing pickles into jars for ten hours a day, she made seventy cents, which amounted to $4.20 a week, of which $3.00 was spent for board. Of her first day on the job she wrote:

> My hands are stiff, my thumbs almost blistered.... Cases are emptied and refilled; bottles are labeled, stamped and rolled away...still there are more cases, more jars, more bottles. Oh! the monotony of it...! Now and then someone cuts a finger or runs a splinter under the flesh...and still the work goes on.[2]

Bessie Van Vorst was surprised at the cheerfulness of her fellow workers and decided that the companionship they found in the factory made them more productive workers than they would have been had they worked alone. But she wondered why the women workers lacked the spirit of the men. After work was finished on Saturday, the workers were required to clean the factory floor. While the women got down on their hands and knees and scrubbed, the men merely hosed down the floor and mopped it. She also discovered that the men were properly fed at noon while the women satisfied themselves with cake and pickles. The highest women's wages were lower than the lowest men's wages. She concluded that the difference in "spirit" between the men and the women workers was related to their reasons for working. All the men worked for one reason: they were breadwinners. The women worked for a variety of reasons:

> ...the breadwinner, the semi-breadwinner, the woman who works for luxuries. This inevitably drags the wage level. The self-supporting girl is in competition with the child, with the girl who lives at home and makes a small contribution to the household expenses, and with the girl who is supported, and who spends all her money on her clothes. It is this division of purpose which takes the "spirit" out of them as a class. There will be no strikes among them so long as the question of wages is not equally vital to them all.[3]

It never occurred to Bessie Van Vorst that unions might be of help to the female factory worker. She thought that the solution lay in the founding of industrial arts schools where women could be trained to become skilled hand workers.

Another view of the factory life came from Dorothy Richardson, a young woman of a rural, middle-class background, who worked in a series of factory jobs out of necessity, not choice. Her account of her experiences, The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl (1905), begins with her arrival in New York, a "friendless, penniless girl of eighteen," fresh from a country town in Pennsylvania, where she had spent one winter as a schoolteacher. After wasting several weeks and exhausting her meager savings in a hopeless search for "ladylike" employment, Richardson resolved to take any work she could get.

Haphazardly following newspaper advertisements and help-wanted signs over doorways, she soon discovered how casually workers were hired as well as how nearly impossible it was to earn the $5.00 a week she had counted on for survival. After two cigar factories turned her down for lack of experience, she refused an offer from a third to become an apprentice for three years, after which she could draw the union wage. Discouraged from cigar making, she followed a lead to a book bindery where she accepted a job at $3.00 a week, but decided to keep looking. Her next offer, from a Brooklyn storekeeper, was no improvement: $3.50 for an 87-hour week! Turned down as inexperienced by a candy manufacturer and offered $1.50 a week as a learner in an artificial flower factory, Richardson finally landed a job at $3.00 a week as a learner in a paper box factory.

The first day on the job, an experienced hand quickly "learned" her in the job, which consisted of "pasting slippery, sticky strips of muslin over the corners of the rough brown boxes that were piled high about us in frail, tottering towers reaching to the ceiling."[4] The boxes were then lined with tissue and lace and decorated with the labels of fashionable Fifth Avenue shops. Richardson noted how the other girls lightened the routine of the work by reading cheap romances during their half-hour lunch break, and by singing sentimental songs and gossiping about the clubs where they usually went to dance after the long workday.

In the course of the second day's work, which was a Saturday, the pace was speeded up and before the end of the day one of the younger girls--little more than a child--was "carried away unconscious, with two bleeding finger stumps."

> Little Jennie, the unfortunate girl's turner in and fellow-worker for two years, wept bitterly as she wiped away the blood from the long shining knife and prepared to take the place of her old superior, with its increased wage of five dollars and a half a week. The little girl had been making only three dollars and a quarter, and so, as Henrietta remarked, "It's a pretty bad accident that don't bring good to somebody."[5]

Not even the accident interrupted the hectic pace as the girls strained to finish the work for late afternoon delivery:

> Blind and dizzy with fatigue, I peered down the long dusty aisles of boxes toward the clock...It was only two. Every effort, human and mechanical, all over the great factory was now strained almost to the breaking-point. How long can this agony last? How long can the roar and the rush and the throbbing pain continue until that nameless and unknown something snaps like an overstrained fiddle string and brings relief?...By four o'clock the last box was done. Machines became mute, wheels were stilled, and the long black belts sagged into limp folds. Every girl seized a broom or a scrubpail and hilarity reigned supreme while we swept and scrubbed for the next half-hour.[6]

Leaving the box factory after two days, owing to a disagreeable episode with a fellow worker, Dorothy Richardson next found work in an artificial flower factory, where she learned that in the right circumstances factory work could be pleasant:

> I passed down a narrow path between two rows of tables that looked like blossoming hedges. Through the green of branches and leaves flashed the white of shirt-waists, and among the scarlet and purple and yellow and blue of myriad flowers bobbed the smiling faces of girls as they looked up from their task long enough to inspect the passing stranger. Here were no harsh sounds, no rasping voices, no shrill laughter, no pounding of engines. Everything just as one would expect to find it in a flower-garden--soft voices humming like bees, and gentle merriment that flowed musically as a brook over stones.[7]

The women, half of whom were foreign-born, seemed well-bred and well-spoken compared with the workers in the box factory. Richardson was impressed by the forewoman, Miss Higgins, who had risen from the ranks and now earned the spectacular sum of $50 a week. She also admired the skill of the rose makers, the "elite" of the trade. Unfortunately, flower making was seasonal, dependent on the rhythms of the hat business; after four weeks, Richardson, along with many of the other workers, was laid off.

Together with two friends, she lasted one day in an underwear factory where they tried to master the nerve-racking industrial sewing machines, and made ten cents among them. There followed a job making jewelry boxes at $3.00 a week for a 48-hour week rather than the 60 hours they were accustomed to. Richardson lost this job when she took time off to attend to urgent personal matters, and lost no time answering an advertisement that read "Shakers wanted." She found herself employed at a steam laundry alongside fellow workers who had been rounded up on the street by a local barber and brought to the laundry in a wagon. Her work now consisted of shaking out the wet clothes and linens just as they emerged twisted from the steam wringer. When the work was going full blast,

> every one of the hundred and twenty-five girls worked with frenzied energy as the avalanche of clothes kept falling in upon us and were sent with lightning speed through the different processes, from the tubs to the packers' counters. Nor was there any abatement of the snowy landslide--not a moment to stop and rest the aching arms.[8]

Feminine modesty was forgotten as the women opened their dresses and removed their shoes in the unbearable moist heat. When Richardson asked a fellow worker why she saw only black men in the plant except for the foreman, the old woman replied:

> "and d'ye think any white man that called hisself a white man would work in sich a place as this and with naygurs?"
> "But we work here," I argued.
> "Well, we be wimmin'," she declared.[9]

Richardson left this, her last industrial job, to escape the unwelcome attentions of the boss, who had pinched her arm and promised her a promotion. On her way home, dazed with exhaustion, she met an old friend, who rescued her, and helped her to get started as a white-collar worker.

Reflecting on the problems of working women, Dorothy Richardson tended to blame the women rather than the economic system. In her view, most women workers did not know how to work with dignity and skill but were merely "worked." They were too "content" with their jobs and less critical of their harsh working conditions than most outside observers. Such contentment--really apathy--thought Richardson, prevented effective union organization among women.

WOMEN AND ORGANIZED LABOR

Dorothy Richardson and other writers and reformers recognized unions as the hope of working women, but were aware of the many obstacles to effective unionization. Women, as a rule, did not regard their jobs as permanent, were easily intimidated by the boss and often lacked the time and inclination to go to union meetings. They also frequently faced the hostility or indifference of male unionists. Furthermore, union meetings were often held in saloons and other male strongholds where women did not feel comfortable. In 1895, women made up 5 percent of all union members. After the recessions of 1893-1897 and 1907-1909, it was down to 3 percent in 1910, approximately 64,000 women out of 1.5 million union members.[10]

Women, the Knights of Labor and the AFL

Women workers had held strikes and formed unions throughout the 19th century, but no permanent labor organizations had emerged. We should

remember that intense antiunion sentiment was widespread in the post-Civil War period, making it difficult for all workers to organize. Employers stopped at nothing--including violence--to suppress union organization. Given such hostility, the secrecy surrounding the founding and early activities of the Knights of Labor is not surprising. Founded in 1869 as a secret society with an elaborate ritual and a centralized structure, the Knights came out into the open in the 1880's and for a brief period gave promise of being a serious national labor organization.

During the 1880's the Knights reached out to all workers--skilled and unskilled, white and black, men and women. Women in a wide variety of occupations, including homemaking, were organized into assemblies. An important leader of women workers in the Knights of Labor was Leonora Barry (1849-1930), who had been born in Ireland and brought to America at age three. She taught school until her marriage to William Barry, who was also Irish-born. Left a widow with two children to support in 1881, she found work as a hand in a hosiery mill in Amsterdam, New York. She soon joined an assembly of women belonging to the Knights, attracted by its doctrine of equal pay for equal work. Before long she was a leader of her assembly and in 1886 was appointed as special investigator, with responsibility for inspecting the conditions in which women worked and for organizing the women workers. For the next four years Leonora Barry traveled widely, reporting to the General Assembly on the conditions she saw in sweatshops and factories--when employers would let her in, that is. She attempted, not always successfully, to form new assemblies of women, spoke at countless meetings, established two cooperative shirt factories and helped to get a factory inspection law passed in the Pennsylvania legislature. Leonora Barry left the post in 1890, but no one took her place. By that time the Knights of Labor was in decline, and its rival, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was becoming the dominant force in the labor movement.

Founded in 1886, the AFL, in contrast to the Knights, was a loosely connected association of national and international workers organized along craft lines among mostly skilled workers. Under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, the AFL pursued a policy of "pure and simple unionism." It believed that individual unions should press for immediate gains and not depend on legislation to protect the worker. It opposed dual unionism (competing unions in the same trade), supported the closed shop and fostered worker solidarity. It made no revolutionary claims and adopted a political philosophy of rewarding labor's friends and punishing its enemies. It is true that the AFL failed to reach out to the masses of unskilled workers--the most exploited sector of the work force--but it is probably equally true that only a pragmatic organization with limited goals could have survived the persistent attempts by industry to crush the growing labor movement.

Women were eligible for membership in the AFL from the beginning. At AFL conventions, Gompers expressed the view that women workers should be organized and receive equal pay with men. In practice, however, the AFL did not go out of its way to organize women, or to encourage those women who sought AFL aid in forming their own locals. At the AFL convention of 1891 Ida M. Van Etten, a representative of the Working Women's Society of New York, reported on the exploitation of women workers through the "sweating" system and called for organization, not charity, as the only hope:

who sought AFL aid in forming their own locals. At the AFL convention of 1891 Ida M. Van Etten, a representative of the Working Women's Society of New York, reported on the exploitation of women workers through the "sweating" system and called for organization, not charity, as the only hope:

> ...women workers either must become organized and receive not only equal pay for equal work, but also equal opportunities for working, or they will...naturally form an inferior class in every trade in which they enter; a class more poorly paid, and who will, in consequence, work longer hours...In this condition they will be a constant menace to wages; they will be used, in case of strikes and lockouts, to supply the places of union men.[11]

It was recommended that the AFL create a salaried post for a woman organizer; in 1892 Mary Kenney (O'Sullivan) (1864-1943), a bindery worker, was appointed to the post.

The daughter of Irish immigrants--like so many outstanding union organizers--Mary Kenney began work in a bindery at the age of fourteen to support her sick mother after her father's death. And she learned all the parts of the trade that employers were willing to teach to a woman. Moving to Chicago in the 1880's, she found work in a bindery and soon organized fellow workers into Woman's Bookbinding Union Number 1. She lived in Hull-House and was active there in forming a working women's boarding club. As the first woman organizer for the AFL, a post she held for six months, Mary Kenney organized garment workers in New York City, shirtwaist makers in Troy, and printers, binders and other workers in Massachusetts.

The Women's Trade Union League

Mary Kenney's efforts to organize women workers did not end when she left the AFL post. After her marriage in 1894 to Jack O'Sullivan, a labor editor, the couple lived in Boston and both remained active in the labor movement. Unlike most husbands of that time, Jack O'Sullivan encouraged his wife to continue her work for labor, and took on a share of the housework and child care so that she could go to meetings.

Aware of the difficulties that faced women workers trying to organize without help from established unions, O'Sullivan met frequently with settlement house and labor leaders to discuss these problems. Out of these meetings emerged the idea for a national organization which would concern itself with the problems of women workers in all trades. When the AFL convened in Boston in 1903, Mary O'Sullivan sought Gompers' aid in announcing the founding meeting of such an organization. On the evening of November 14, 1903, reform leaders such as Jane Addams and the leaders of unions with women members founded the National Women's Trade Union League (WTUL). Mary O'Sullivan and Jane Addams were among the officers of the new organization. Its first board consisted of both reformers and worker members.

The League soon had branches in Chicago, Boston and New York. Its motto--the eight-hour day, a living wage, to guard the home (all encircling a woman holding a child and clasping the hand of a woman warrior)--soon appeared as a seal on all League publications. The WTUL aimed to organize women workers into unions, to help organized women press for better conditions and to provide pleasant meeting places for women workers on and off the job. The League was endorsed by the AFL. League organizers tried to organize women into existing AFL unions, or when that was impossible to obtain a union charter for the women directly from the AFL. When the male unionists in the trade were hostile to either course, the League itself had to serve as the parent organization. In this situation, the women's unions did not have the full power of the labor movement behind them.

League membership was open to all--men and women, union and nonunion. Women factory workers joined, as well as middle-class women who were concerned about the wage-earning woman. These middle-class allies of working women brought vital financial resources to the League as well as experience in organization work and publicity. Two of the most dedicated middle-class leaders of the League--Mary Dreier and her sister, Margaret Dreier Robins--were drawn into the organization by a worker member--Leonora O'Reilly, a shirtwaist maker and garment trade organizer known for her skill as an orator.

Margaret Dreier Robins (1868-1945) brought to the League's projects not only her own wealth, but that of other wealthy people. An able speaker with a warm personality, Margaret Robins was at home at street corner rallies and on the lecture platform. She did much to make the League a bridge between social classes. Her most cherished goal was to educate working women to be leaders. To this end, she helped found a training school where trade union women combined fieldwork as organizers with classroom work. A remarkable number of League-trained women went on to leadership roles in unions and in government work, as well as in the League itself.

Rose Schneiderman, an organizer of the capmakers' union and later president of the New York branch of the WTUL, was typical of the worker-leaders trained by the League. A Russian-Jewish immigrant, she had come to America in 1890 at the age of eight. After her father's death barely two years later, the family was so poor that she and her brother were cared for at an orphanage until her mother was ready to support them. Having completed the 9th grade, she was forced to leave school at the age of thirteen to help support her family. In her first job running errands for a department store, she earned $2.16 for a sixty-four-hour week. Another department store job netted her $2.75 after three years. Discouraged by the low pay, she next secured a job sewing men's cap linings for $6.00 a week. Typically, the cap industry was divided along sex lines: the men did the cutting and sewing, while the women made the linings. She had to furnish her own sewing machine and buy her own thread. In 1903 Rose Schneiderman and a fellow worker organized their shop, collecting enough

membership pledges to get a charter from the United Cloth Hat and Capmakers Union. In 1904, when she was twenty-two, she was elected to the Union's executive board and in the winter of 1904-05 she found herself involved in a long strike of the Capmakers. During the strike Schneiderman met Margaret Dreier (shortly before her marriage), who visited strike headquarters to find out if the League could be of use to the strikers and then succeeded in arranging press coverage for the strike, the first time it had been mentioned in the newspapers. After the strike was over, Schneiderman joined the WTUL and gradually made that organization the center of a life devoted to the trade union movement.

Other working women for whom the League became both an education and a career were Agnes Nestor of the International Gloveworkers; Mary Anderson of the shoe workers, who eventually became the first director of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor; Elizabeth Christman, glove worker; and Maud Swartz of the International Typographical Union, who became the first woman worker to be president of the National WTUL in 1922, when Margaret Robins stepped down. Although the League may have ultimately failed in organizing masses of working women, it did enable a large group of women workers with leadership potential to become educated, to have worthwhile careers in the labor movement and to enjoy a special kind of sisterhood with dedicated women of all classes.

The League also played an important role in winning working women to the suffragist cause. Reformers like Jane Addams and Margaret Dreier Robins were convinced that working women needed the vote to win legislation favorable to workers, and that the suffragists could widen their base of support by winning workers to their cause. League women like Schneiderman and Nestor enthusiastically stumped for suffrage, undoubtedly contributing to its victory in New York in 1917.

The Uprising of 20,000

The Women's Trade Union League was especially effective during strikes. League organizers conducted strike meetings, organized picket line assistance, collected bail money and arranged legal assistance for arrested strikers and helped to obtain favorable press coverage for the strike. A high point for the League was its participation in the dramatic strike of the shirtwaist makers in the winter of 1909-10. This strike, later known in labor folklore as "the uprising of 20,000," marked the emergence of large numbers of women workers in the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), the permanent union of workers in the female garment industry.

In 1909 there were about 500 shirtwaist factories in New York, employing some 30,000 workers, many of them from immigrant families--Italian, Jewish, Irish. The shirtwaist--the fashion uniform of the working woman--was a neat, full-sleeved white blouse that fit close at the waist and was generally worn with a dark skirt, the style popularized in the "Gibson Girl" drawings of the popular artist Charles Dana Gibson. The shirtwaists--like other products of the garment industry--were now being manufactured in new factory

lofts rather than in tenement sweatshops that had been eliminated as a result of factory legislation. Unfortunately, unfavorable working conditions--mostly systems of petty harassment--existed in the new factories: exit doors were locked during working hours; clocks were covered so that workers could not glance at them while working; forewomen followed the women into the bathrooms to prevent loitering; and the women's handbags were searched at closing time to prevent pilfering. The workers were required to pay for their needles and for electricity; they often sat on boxes rather than chairs with backs, and when late, they were either fined or sent home without being able to work.

In 1909 the trouble started at the Triangle and Leiserson shops. At the Triangle shop, where there was a company union, a number of workers secretly joined a local of the ILGWU. When the company got wind of it, they quietly discharged the women on the pretext that there was a lull in the trade. When the workers realized from the advertisements in the next morning's paper that the company was hiring new workers, they organized a picket line and declared the shop on strike. The employers at Triangle and at Leiserson, which was also on strike, retaliated by hiring prostitutes to stand at the factory door and attack the pickets. Many of the pickets were arrested and fined. Soon the Women's Trade Union League joined the picket line to witness the arrests. Mary Dreier, the New York League president, was arrested and suddenly the strike became news. Throughout the shirtwaist industry, workers were developing a sense of solidarity. Workers at the Diamond Shirtwaist Company, for example, walked out when they learned that they were working on garments brought in from the Triangle factory. Sentiment for a general strike in the industry was growing.

On November 22, the strike committee of the union, Local 25, called a mass meeting in the great hall of Cooper Union. One speaker after another addressed the overflowing crowd, the leaders of the ILGWU urging moderation, fearful that the new union could not sustain a long strike. Suddenly a young woman, clearly still in her teens, asked for permission to speak. She was Clara Lemlich, a worker at one of the struck factories. Just two days before, she had been assaulted on the picket line. Speaking in Yiddish, her voice trembling with feeling, she declared:

> I am a working girl, one of those who are on strike against intolerable conditions. I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in general terms. What we are here for is to decide whether we shall or shall not strike. I offer a resolution that a general strike be declared now.[12]

The audience was on its feet instantly, roaring approval. The chairperson asked if anyone seconded the motion. Once again the audience, as if one body, seconded. "Will you take the old Jewish oath?" the chairperson demanded. With that, two thousand hands were raised as the crowd uttered in one voice: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, then let my right hand lose its power."

During the next few days the shirtwaist makers and dressmakers poured out of their shops until about 20,000 were out from 500 shops. The union aimed to get as many workers out as possible and sign up new members, which they did at the rate of 1,000 a day.

The Women's Trade Union League immediately stepped in to coordinate strike activities and to help register new members of the union. Wealthy members of the League, whom Rose Schneiderman called "the mink brigade," were stationed at the picket lines to be witnesses to unlawful arrests. The League also raised money for bail and strike relief. Worker members like Rose Schneiderman and Pauline Newman raised money speaking to unions and women's clubs in New England and upstate New York. In New York City, the League enlisted some of New York's richest women in fund-raising efforts with rather disappointing results--results which suggest that the WTUL'S efforts to break down class barriers could go only so far. Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont, society woman and suffragist, rented the New York Hippodrome for a rally to be attended by both society women and striking garment workers. One of the latter, Theresa Malkiel, observed in her Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker:

> The most of our girls had to walk both ways in order to save their carfare. Many came without dinner, but the collection baskets had more pennies than anything else in them--it was our girls themselves who helped to make it up, and yet there were so many rich women present. And I'm sure the speakers made it plain to them how badly the money was needed, then how comes it that out of the $300 collected there should be $70 in pennies?[13]

The League's publicity committee kept the strike on the front pages, reminding the public of the unsatisfactory working conditions as well as alerting it to the violent treatment of the pickets by the police and by hired thugs. Although there were men among the strikers, women bore the brunt of the police brutality, were arrested more frequently, and accepted the lowest strike benefits.

The strike ended on February 15, 1910, with some shops still on strike and others having settled earlier. In most, though not all factories, the workers had won such terms as a 52-hour week and no discrimination against strikers, but many of the shops refused to recognize the union. Despite this partial victory, the groundwork had been laid for a strong union of mostly women workers. The behavior of the women during the strike had laid to rest any notions that women couldn't be organized or subject to strike discipline. The strike unquestionably sparked a mood of protest in labor ranks, which influenced one of the older unions--the cloak makers, which had a majority of male members--to strike in July 1910. The outcome of that strike was a settlement that became known as the Protocol of Peace, an agreement which brought official recognition of the union, and stabilized labor-management relations in the garment industry for some time to come.

The Triangle Fire

The strike that had begun at the Triangle factory was not won there. Thanks to the company's use of scabs, it was one of the shops where the workers had had to return to work without an agreement. Two of the workers' demands had never even been considered by the firm: unlocked doors leading out of the factory, which was located on the eighth, ninth and tenth floors of the ten-story Asch Building on Greene Street and Washington Place, a block from Washington Square, and adequate fire escapes.

People passing by the Asch building at about 4:30 p.m. on March 25, 1911, heard the muffled explosion and saw the smoke billowing out of an eighth-floor window. A flash fire had broken out on the eighth floor and instantly spread upward to the other two floors of the Triangle Factory, into which 500 workers, most of them young women, were crowded. Despite the solid brick "fireproof" exterior of the ten-year-old building, the inside structures were of wood, with wooden floors and window trim. The aisles of the factory were clogged with wicker work baskets piled with scraps of fabrics; around the sewing machines were oil-soaked rags used to clean the machines. The doors to the factory opened in rather than out. There had been no fire drills.

Some of the workers escaped through the exits and, using the elevators and stairways, made it to the street or the roof. Others were overcome by smoke at their machines and died there; still others, unable to reach the exits, moved toward the windows and jumped, a few to safety, most to their deaths. What looked to passersby like bundles of cloth were bodies hurtling to the pavement, some of them in flames. One of the witnesses to the tragedy, the journalist Mary Heaton Vorse, wrote:

> I hurried over to the Square, drawn by the contagion of disaster...People ahead of me were crying:
> "Another's jumped! Another's jumped, all on fire!"
> Like burning torches, girls jumped into the street. One hundred twenty-nine were burned to death that day. Two little painted girls were standing near me. One said to the other, "Now, Eva, ain't you glad you left the factory?"[14]

The fire fighters, who arrived only ten minutes after the fire started, could do little. Their ladders reached only to the sixth floor and the hoses only to the seventh.

By the time it was over, 146 workers, most of them Jewish and Italian women, were dead--burned, suffocated or smashed on the pavement. The bodies were brought to one of the piers, which had been turned into a giant morgue, and slowly relatives and friends of the victims came to identify the bodies.

A spirit of mourning and protest filled the city. Stories about the victims and eyewitness accounts filled the pages of the newspapers, especially the Yiddish-language press. On the front page of the Jewish Daily Forward, the largest Yiddish daily, appeared a lament by one of the well-known "sweat-shop" poets, Morris Rosenfeld:

> ...This is our funeral
> These our graves,
> Our children,
> The beautiful, beautiful flowers destroyed,
> Our lovely ones burned,
> Their ashes buried under a mountain of caskets.[15]

Memorial and protest meetings were held to demand legislation mandating fire protection, worker's compensation and factory inspection laws. Many still remember the meeting held on April 2 in the Metropolitan Opera House, sponsored by the WTUL, and the impassioned words of Rose Schneiderman, with the flaming red hair, her tiny figure vibrant with anger:

> I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies if I came here to talk good fellowship. We have tried you good people of the public and we have found you wanting...
>
> This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city. Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 143 [sic] of us are burned to death.
>
> We have tried you, citizens; we are trying you now, and you have a couple of dollars for the sorrowing mothers and daughters and sisters by way of a charity gift. But every time the workers come out in the only way they know to protest against conditions which are unbearable, the strong hand of the law is allowed to press down heavily upon us.
>
> ...I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from my experience it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working-class movement.[16]

On April 5, a mass funeral took place, and a funeral march was arranged that aroused the spirit of organized labor. More than 120,000 men and women marched in a solemn procession throughout the rainy day.

Justice was not immediately served: the owners of the Triangle Factory were acquitted by a jury of manslaughter charges and were soon back in business. In the long run, however, the mood of protest aroused by the

fire bore practical results. Letters from workers complaining of unsafe conditions poured in to the Women's Trade Union League. The New York State Factory Investigating Commission was formed, with power to inspect factories and make recommendations on such matters as fire prevention and safety, sanitation, machinery, hours and wages. One of its chief investigators was Frances Perkins, then secretary of the New York Consumers' League. She had witnessed the Triangle Fire and never forgot it. Her work for the Commission was the beginning of a public career devoted to winning better conditions for American workers.

Women in the Men's Garment Industry

The militant efforts of women workers to establish a strong union in the ladies' garment industry were repeated by women working in the men's clothing trades. In 1910 a strike begun by 14 determined young women at the Hart, Schaffner and Marx clothing factory in Chicago led to a general strike in which the WTUL played the same role it had played in the 1909 shirtwaist makers strike. Margaret Dreier Robins and Mary Anderson of the WTUL were closely involved in support of the strikers, as were other well-known Chicago reformers such as Mary McDowell and Jane Addams. After the strike had dragged on for five weeks, Jane Addams arranged a meeting with Joseph Schaffner. "Mr. Schaffner," she said, "I wonder how long it's been since you saw with your own eyes the conditions under which these people work for you?" She persuaded Schaffner to tour his own factory with her. He then admitted, "I wasn't surprised they went on strike. I was only surprised they waited so long."[17]

The Union forged during the strike eventually broke off from the United Garment Workers and formed the nucleus of a new, stronger union in the men's clothing industry--the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, founded in 1914. Bessie Abramowitz (later married to Sidney Hillman, the president of the union), one of the 14 original strikers, was the one woman elected a vice-president on the union's first executive board. Women who held executive positions in the garment unions were the exception rather than the rule, however. Although large numbers of women were members of both unions, and many served in middle leadership posts such as shop steward, organizer and representative, they were rarely chosen for top positions.

Nevertheless, the birth of two durable unions with thousands of women members, the vital presence of the Women's Trade Union League as a school for women labor leaders and the passage of factory legislation as a result of the Triangle fire should be regarded as significant victories for women workers in the early 20th century.

MILLWORKERS, MINERS AND MOTHER JONES

In the mill and mining towns of West Virgina, Pennsylvania, the South and the West, whole families toiled, their combined wages barely covering

the rent for the company-owned tenement apartment or shanty and the cost of necessities at the company store. Some observers of workers in the mills and mines tried to awaken the American public to industrial misery with pictures and words. Lewis Hine, a pioneer social photographer, traveled throughout the nation for the National Child Labor Committee, photographing children in industry. His pictures of boy breakers in the coal mines, of girl workers in southern textile mills and canneries, provided overwhelming evidence of the tragedy of child labor. Another reformer, Marie Van Vorst, wishing to experience factory work firsthand, found a job in a South Carolina cotton mill. In the southern textile industry, which with the help of northern capital was developing rapidly at the end of the 19th century, more than 60 percent of the workers were women and children. In her account, The Woman Who Toils, Marie Van Vorst describes the ugly shanties in which the workers lived, the greasy and unnourishing food, the endlessly long day--12 hours or more--and the low wages. The "spoolers," those who ran the machines that wound the yarn, strained their left arm and side and were subject to heart trouble. All the workers, even the smallest children, took snuff and chewed tobacco:

> Their mouths are brown with it; their teeth are black with it. They take it and smell it and carry it about under their tongues all day in a black wad, spitting it all over the floor...the air of the room is white with cotton....These little particles are breathed into the nose, drawn into the lungs. Lung disease and pneumonia--consumption--are the constant, never-absent scourge of the mill village. The girls expectorate to such an extent that the floor is nauseous with it; the little girls practise spitting and are adept at it.[18]

Many of the children, some still babies, had had their fingers, hands and even arms cut off by machinery. Although Van Vorst looked to protective legislation, an end to child labor and unionization to provide a better life for the mill workers, she was realistic about the obstacles they faced. State legislatures voted down protective legislation and bills restricting child labor, mill owners and superintendents boasted of their hostility to labor unions and northern absentee owners resisted anything that reduced profits.

The men, women and children of the mill and mining towns found an unusual champion in a woman who always dressed in a black silk dress, with a bit of lace around the neck, and wore a bonnet trimmed with flowers. She was Mary Harris Jones (1830-1930), regarded by workers throughout the nation as one of the greatest labor agitators of the time. This legendary Irish-born woman, who became "Mother Jones" to railroad workers, miners and mill workers, had lost her own children and her husband in a yellow fever epidemic in Memphis during the 1860's. Before her marriage she had worked as a dressmaker and taught school. Her interest in labor problems was probably aroused in the 1870's, when she started to attend meetings of the

Knights of Labor after her dressmaking shop nad been destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871. According to her Autobiography, Mother Jones began her career as a labor agitator in 1877 when she helped Pittsburgh strikers during a nationwide railroad dispute. From the 1880's onward, she became a roving agitator, moving from one industrial area to another, most often allying herself with the coal miners. If Mother Jones was really born in 1830 as she claimed, then she was in her 70's and 80's during her most active period in the labor movement, and lived to be one hundred years old.

As a paid organizer for the United Mine Workers during the early 1900's, she helped sustain the morale of striking miners and effectively organized their wives to frighten away strikebreakers. During a strike of miners in Arnot, Pennsylvania, for example, she instructed the hot-tempered leader of her band of miners' wives:

> You lead the army up to the Drip Mouth. Take that tin dishpan you have with you and your hammer, and then the scabs and the mules come up, begin to hammer and howl. Then all of you hammer and howl and be ready to chase the scabs with your mops and brooms. Don't be afraid of anyone.[19]

In a later struggle, she marched a band of wives of organized miners over the mountains, beating their tin pans, to organize miners in Coaldale who had been forbidden to assemble and whose town was guarded by militia. Mother Jones and her women pleaded their cause to the militia, who laughed at the "army of women in kitchen aprons with dishpans and mops," and let them through to Coaldale where they organized every worker in town.

In some of the mining towns there were also clothing factories and textile mills which had been opened to employ the wives and children of miners. Adept as she was at organizing miners' wives, however, Mother Jones never organized the women in the mills. Accepting traditional roles, she believed that men should earn a living wage and that women should be able to stay home and care for their families properly. Like other reformers of the time, her heart was wrung by the sight of child laborers. When she wasn't organizing miners and their wives, she made a number of dramatic efforts to publicize the plight of the working children.

In order to gather information on child labor conditions, Mother Jones went from one cotton mill to another, pretending to be a worker whose children would follow shortly. She described the scenes she found:

> Little girls and boys, barefooted, walked up and down between the endless rows of spindles, reaching thin little hands into the machinery to repair snapped threads. They crawled under machinery to oil it. They replaced spindles all day long...Tiny babies of six years old with faces of sixty did an eight hour shift for ten cents a day. If they fell asleep, cold water was dashed in their faces, and the voice of the manager yelled above the ceaseless racket and whir of the machines.[20]

She told how the eleven-year-old daughter of the woman with whom she boarded had her hair caught in the machinery and her scalp torn off. She recorded the conversation she had with one young mother she met on the way home from night work carrying her "tiny bundle of a baby in her arms":

> How old is the baby?
> Three days. I just went back this morning. The boss was good and saved my place.
> When did you leave?
> The boss was good; he let me off early the night the baby was born.
> What do you do with the baby while you work?
> Oh the boss is good and he lets me have a little box with a pillow in it beside the loom. The baby sleeps there and when it cries, I nurse it.[21]

In the spring of 1903, Mother Jones was on the scene in Kensington, Pennsylvania, where 75,000 textile workers were on strike, at least 10,000 of them children. Aroused by the sight of the children she saw at strike headquarters, she was determined to dramatize their plight. At an outdoor rally in Philadelphia she put the stoop-shouldered, skinny, maimed children on the platform and, lifting up the puniest ones in her arms, she declared that "Philadelphia's mansions were built on the broken bones of these children." She then organized a march of some of the children from Philadelphia to Oyster Bay, New York, where she hoped to present them to President Theodore Roosevelt and ask for a law prohibiting child labor. Although many of the children were too weak to complete the march, and the President refused to see them, the exploit did publicize the conditions of child labor. Not long afterward, Pennsylvania passed a law forbidding child labor under the age of fourteen.

After the children's crusade, Mother Jones returned to organizing miners and their wives. During a strike in West Virginia in 1912-13, she was arrested by state militia and convicted of conspiracy to commit murder when a factory guard was killed. After protests from labor circles, she was released by the governor. She went west to participate in the strikes of Colorado miners and was repeatedly arrested and removed from the scene, only to return. Although she was not present in Ludlow, Colorado, when, on April 20, 1914, striking miners and their families living in a tent colony were attacked with machine guns and over twenty men, women and children were killed, she was deeply moved by this tragic episode. She launched a speaking tour around the country to tell the story and tried to convince President Woodrow Wilson to intervene in the strike.

Traveling endlessly, usually by train, Mother Jones worked for the cause of labor to the end of her life. During the New York City transit strike of 1916, she spoke to the wives of the streetcar men; in 1919 she spoke to striking steelworkers in Pennsylvania. Thousands of workers mourned her death in 1930, and a song, "The Death of Mother Jones," began to circulate, especially in the mining towns. Its second stanza goes:

Through the hills and o'er the valleys in every mining town,
Mother Jones was ready to help them; she never let them down.
In front with the striking miners she always could be found;
She fought for right and justice; she took a noble stand.[22]

A radical and a maverick by temperament, Mother Jones had no use for progressive reform and women's suffrage. She once told a group of women who asked her to speak at a dinner: "You don't need a vote to raise hell! You need convictions and a voice! The plutocrats have organized their women," she declared. "They keep them busy with suffrage and prohibition and charity."[23]

WOMEN IN THE I.W.W.

Mother Jones believed in industrial unionism. She was among those on the speakers' platform at the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World on June 27, 1905. The I.W.W., which flourished for about a dozen years after its founding, was an industrial labor organization devoted to the goal of "one big union" of all workers. In conscious opposition to the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor, the I.W.W., or Wobblies, welcomed to membership all wage earners--skilled and unskilled, black and white, Native American and immigrant, men and women. Among its founding groups were the Western Federation of Miners, whose secretary "Big Bill" Haywood became the most famous Wobbly; anti-AFL unionists; socialists such as Eugene Debs, leader of the American Socialist Party; and anarchists such as Lucy Parsons (the widow of Albert Parsons, the Chicago anarchist who had been hanged after the Haymarket riots). The founders of the I.W.W. hoped to create, in Haywood's words, "a working-class movement in possession of the economic power, the means of life, in control of the machinery of production and distribution without regard to capitalist masters." Radical opposition to capitalism was further expressed in the opening sentence of the preamble to the I.W.W. constitution: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common."[24] The I.W.W. leaders hoped to achieve their revolutionary goal through direct action, by which they meant strikes initiated by and controlled by the workers themselves. They refused to make formal contracts with employers on the grounds that such agreements prevented workers from striking in support of one another.

There were many women among Wobbly organizers and songwriters. (The I.W.W. developed the use of songs to attract and hold crowds at meetings. Many of the American labor movement's most popular songs--"Solidarity Forever" is one example--have Wobbly origins.) No one better personified the fighting Wobbly spirit than Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964). It was she that Wobbly songwriter and martyr Joe Hill most likely had in mind when he wrote "The Rebel Girl," a song intended to "line up women workers" for the I.W.W.:

Chorus

That's the Rebel Girl. That's the Rebel Girl
To the working class she's a precious pearl.
She brings courage, pride and joy
To the Fighting Rebel boy.
We've had girls before
But we need some more
In the Industrial Workers of the World,
For it's great to fight for freedom
With a Rebel Girl.[25]

Of Irish immigrant background, Gurley Flynn, as she was called, became a popular street-corner soapbox orator while still in her teens. She spent her childhood years in New England and Ohio before her family moved to the South Bronx in 1900, where she had her first glimpse of urban poverty. Her father, a socialist who had voted for Debs, took her to meetings at his socialist club. In 1906, when she was not yet 16, she made her first speech before the club on the subject of women's rights, arguing that in a socialist society the drudgery of women's unpaid labor in the home would be abolished as collective kitchens, nurseries, and laundries took over domestic tasks.

She was soon much in demand as a speaker at street-corner rallies and indoor mass meetings. Her first arrest, in August 1906, when she and her father were charged with speaking without a permit and blocking traffic, was the beginning of a lifelong series of free-speech battles. Joining the I.W.W. in 1906, Gurley Flynn traveled for the next few years as a paid organizer, and was caught up in free-speech fights growing out of I.W.W. attempts to organize miners and lumberjacks in the West. At age 18 she met and married a miner and fellow organizer, Jack Jones. During the free-speech fight waged by the I.W.W. in Spokane, Washington, in 1909, Flynn, 19 years old and pregnant, attracted the most attention from the press and local authorities. She was described in the local newspaper as a "frail, slender girl, pretty and graceful, with a resonant voice and a fiery eloquence that attracted huge crowds."[26] Her deceptive appearance probably influenced a local jury judging her and a fellow worker on charges of criminal conspiracy. When they acquitted her and convicted the other worker, a man, the furious prosecutor demanded, "What in hell do you fellows mean by acquitting the most guilty and convicting the man, far less guilty?" The foreman replied, "She ain't a criminal, Fred an' you know it! If you think this jury or any jury, is goin' to send that pretty Irish girl to jail merely for bein' big-hearted and idealistic, to mix with all those whores and crooks down at the pen, you've got another guess comin'."[27]

Big-hearted and idealistic she was, as well as pretty and Irish, but she was also a fighter and more than a match for the authorities. When Elizabeth Gurley Flynn joined the Lawrence textile strike in 1912, she had years of experience behind her as an organizer and orator. In Lawrence, for the first time she would have the chance to work with a large group of women workers.

The "Bread and Roses" Strike: Lawrence, 1912

The textile mills of the South were not unique examples of industrial exploitation. The strike of 25,000 textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, demonstrated that intolerable conditions also existed in the birthplace of the American textile industry, in a state where Progressive ideas had even made some headway in the legislature. It was a piece of labor legislation, in fact, that led to the strike. In January 1912, a Massachusetts law went into effect reducing the hours of work per week of women and children under 18 from 56 to 54. In response, the American Woolen Company, the owner of most of the Lawrence mills, decided to reduce the hours of the entire work force and reduce wages proportionately--a 3-1/2 percent cut, which translated into three loaves of bread less each week. The bulk of the Lawrence workers were unskilled immigrants of many nationalities--Italian, German, French-Canadian, French-Belgian, Polish, Lithuanian, Syrian, Russian and Greek.

On January 11, 1912, some Polish women weavers were the first to discover that their pay envelopes were 32 cents short. "Short pay! Short pay!" they shouted, as they and their fellow workers stopped the looms and walked out of the mill. The same scene occurred in one mill after another through that day and the next, as more and more workers joined the strike. By January 13, 20,000 workers were out on strike.

The wage cut was the last straw for workers whose living standards had been declining steadily, even though a high tariff protected the woolen industry. The workers averaged $8.76 a week and about a third of them made less than $7.00 a week. More than half the workers were women and children over 14, who needed the mill work for their families' survival. They lived in crowded four-story wooden tenements, and subsisted on a diet of bread, molasses and beans. The death rate among children was one of the highest for American towns, and it had been discovered that one out of every three mill workers died before age 25, most of them from tuberculosis or other respiratory diseases.

Most of the workers were unorganized: 208 belonged to the United Textile Workers (AFL) and around 300 to the I.W.W. local. As soon as the strike broke out, the I.W.W. sent in Joseph Ettor, one of its executive board members and a skillful organizer, who spoke the languages of many of the immigrant strikers. He formed a strike committee consisting of two representatives from each of the nationalities. Four demands were decided on: a 15 percent increase in wages, a 54-hour week, double time for overtime work and no discrimination against the strikers.

A militia was called in by the mayor to patrol the streets around the mills. Mass picketing began the first week of the strike, the first ever to be conducted in a New England town. Crowds of workers demonstrating in front of the mills were sprayed with fire hoses and fought back by throwing chunks of ice. After 36 were arrested and given one-year prison terms, the

I.W.W. leaders urged a policy of nonviolence and nonresistance to police violence. "The workers are more powerful with their hands in their pockets than all the property of the capitalists," Ettor told a crowd of strikers. Strike relief was organized by Arturo Giovannitti, an Italian poet and newspaper editor from New York. Throughout the ten weeks of the strike, families received $2.00 to $5.00 weekly from funds raised all over the country.

The Lawrence strike frightened many people in and out of Lawrence because it was the first strike of mostly unskilled and foreign-born workers under the leadership of the I.W.W., which preached a radical doctrine of class warfare. John Golden, the head of the United Textile Workers, denounced the strike as "revolutionary and anarchistic," but could not prevent his skilled workers from staying out with the others. The AFL did not endorse the strike and the Women's Trade Union League, which opened a relief station in Lawrence during the strike, found itself in conflict between its sympathy for the strikers and its policy of supporting only AFL-sanctioned strikes. Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, who was caught up in relief work in Lawrence, resigned from the League in protest when Golden--after making a separate deal for the skilled workers--ordered the League women to leave.

The fighting spirit of the strikers caught the imagination of reporters who came to observe the strike. "Lawrence was a singing strike," wrote Mary Heaton Vorse, a journalist who committed herself to the cause of labor as a result of the Lawrence strike. "The workers sang everywhere: at the picket line, at the soup kitchens, at the relief stations, at the strike meetings. Always there was singing."[28] Other observers noted the almost religious spirit of the strikers--their solidarity despite the barriers of language and nationality.

Less than a week after the strike began, dynamite was discovered in three locations and the blame quickly laid on the I.W.W. and the strikers. It was soon discovered that it was a plot to discredit the workers when a local businessman was arrested and charged with planting the dynamite; months later it was proven that the plot was instigated by the American Woolen Company. On the evening of January 29, the day that one of the largest demonstrations had occurred, a young Syrian striker, Anna Lo Pizzo, was killed during a scuffle between police and picketers. Although the strikers said that a police officer had shot her, the strike leaders, Ettor and Giovannitti, who were three miles away at the time, were arrested as "accessories to the murder" and charged with inciting and provoking violence, along with Joseph Caruso, a striker charged with the actual murder. All three were held for eight months. Following the arrest, martial law was enforced, all public meetings declared illegal and twenty-two militia companies ordered in.

At that point, Wobbly leader "Big Bill" Haywood came to Lawrence to assume leadership along with other organizers, among them Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, then twenty-one years old. She was particularly interested in the problems of women workers and held special meetings for them.

> The women worked in the mills for lower pay and in addition had all the housework and care of the children. The old-world attitude of man as the "lord and master" was strong. At the end of the day's work--or now--, of strike duty--the man went home and sat at ease while his wife did all the work preparing the meal, cleaning the house, etc. There was considerable male opposition to women going to meetings and marching on the picket line. We resolutely set out to combat these notions. The women wanted to picket. They were strikers as well as wives and were valiant fighters. We knew that to leave them at home alone, isolated from the strike activity, affected by the complaints of tradespeople, landlords, priests and ministers, was dangerous to the strike.[29]

When Gurley Flynn spoke, wrote Mary Heaton Vorse, "the excitement of the crowd became a visible thing. She stood there, young, with her Irish blue eyes, her face magnolia white and her cloud of black hair, the picture of a youthful revolutionary girl leader. She stirred them up in her appeal for solidarity."[30]

The Lawrence workers used a variety of mass picketing techniques which, though nonviolent, were deeply disturbing to many of the citizens of Lawrence. Strikers would form an endless human chain, a moving picket line of thousands, and march around the mills, each wearing an armband reading "Don't Be a Scab." Strikers linked arms and marched down the sidewalks in large groups in the business district. When dispersed by the police, they moved, in large numbers, in and out of stores without buying anything, a tactic which terrified the storekeepers.

Women did not shirk picket-line duty and were frequently victims of police brutality. On February 19, for example, 200 policemen with their clubs drawn chased 100 women pickets, knocking some of them to the ground and clubbing them. Women with nursing babies were arrested and held in jail.

The struggle of the Lawrence strikers made its way into newspaper headlines outside of Lawrence, as sympathetic journalists wrote eyewitness accounts and strike leaders made weekend visits to different cities to raise money for relief. Publicity favorable to the strikers was heightened when some of the strikers' children were sent to other cities to be cared for by sympathetic families, an idea that had been used in Europe by French and Italian workers. Committees of women in New York and Philadelphia made careful arrangements and the first group of 119 children left Lawrence on February 10 by train to New York. One of those who escorted the children was Margaret Sanger, a trained nurse (later known for her pioneer work in birth control). The following month Sanger testified to a Congressional Committee investigating the strike:

> Out of 119 children, only four had underwear on... their outerwear was almost in rags...their coats were simply torn to shreds...and it was the bitterest weather we have had this winter.[31]

As more groups of children were sent to New York and other cities, the Lawrence authorities became alarmed at the unfavorable publicity, and announced that no more children could leave the city. When 150 children were brought to the station by their parents to leave for Philadelphia on February 24, police and militia surrounded the station, and closed in on the children and parents with their clubs, "beating right and left with no thought of the children who then were in desperate danger of being trampled to death." Some of the women and children were thrown into a patrol wagon, the women charged with "neglect" and detained in jail. The Philadelphia women were arrested and fined.

The police action provoked outrage from every part of the country and proved a turning point in the strike. From Washington came the call for a Congressional investigation and in early March testimony on the strike was heard by a House committee, of which the above account by Sanger is only a sampling.

Threatened by the unfavorable publicity and perhaps fearful of a change in the tariff to its disadvantage, the American Woolen Company moved to settle the strike on terms favorable to the workers. On March 12, the company acceded to all four of the workers' original demands. By the end of the month all of the companies in Lawrence had settled. In the aftermath of the strike, there were short successful strikes in Lowell and New Bedford, in both of which Gurley Flynn worked as an organizer. As a result of the prolonged strike in Lawrence, over 175,000 mill workers in New England enjoyed wage increases in 1912. Then after months of agitation by I.W.W. leaders and by Lawrence workers--including a 24-hour general strike--Ettor, Giovannitti and Caruso were finally tried and acquitted.

The spirit of the Lawrence strikers, particularly of the women, was captured in a banner held aloft by a group of young mill women during a strike parade: "We want bread and roses too."

The slogan, capturing the desire of women workers for beauty and dignity, as well as for life's necessities, inspired a poem honoring the militant women workers:

> As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day
> A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,
> Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
> For the people hear us singing: Bread and roses! Bread and roses![32]

The I.W.W. had won in Lawrence and gained thousands of new members. Yet by the following year membership in the I.W.W. local had dropped to 700 and speedups had led to unemployment and cancelled out the wage increases gained in the strike. The I.W.W.-led strike of silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1913 ended in failure, with the workers, many of them women, begging for their old jobs back.

The decline of the I.W.W. was inevitable. Although their actions were far less extreme than their words, it was their words, their revolutionary rhetoric, that antagonized not only capitalists and local authorities, but also reformers and labor leaders. Their refusal to take part in electoral politics prevented them from having allies with political power and alienated the Socialist party. Their policy of not making contracts with employers prevented them from winning more than short-term gains for workers and from building a permanent power base among unskilled workers. With the entry of the United States into the first World War, many I.W.W. leaders became victims of the government's campaign against radicals.

For those who were concerned about organizing unskilled industrial workers, especially women, there was a lesson to be learned from the Wobbly success in Lawrence. Some members of the Women's Trade Union League were distressed by the League's inability to help the strikers because of its link with the AFL. Sue Ainslie Clark, president of the Boston League, wrote to Margaret Dreier Robins:

> ...many of those in power in the A.F. of L. today seem to be selfish, reactionary and remote from the struggle for bread and liberty of the unskilled workers...we must be free in the future to aid in the struggle of the workers wherever and however we find the "fight on."[33]

In a 1912 letter to an AFL official, Mary McDowell, another WTUL leader, expressed the hope that the AFL would heed the lesson of Lawrence:

> In such industries as those of the steel, meat, textile and harvesters, etc., Industrial Unionism of a constructive type is surely the need of this moment. The AFL will lose out unless it wakes up and adds to the IWW's clever method, that of permanent and constructive organization.[34]

Such permanent and constructive organization of unskilled workers was not to come until the 1930's, when the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) reached out to all unskilled workers. Until that time, when women once again flocked into the labor movement as organizers and rank and file, the "Bread and Roses" strike represented a high point for women's organization in American labor history.

NOTES

1. Robert W. Smuts, *Women and Work in America* (1959; paperback ed., New York, 1971) p. 77.

2. Barbara Meyer Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York, 1977) p. 219. Excerpt is from Bessie Van Vorst and Marie Van Vorst, *The Woman Who Toils* (New York, 1903) pp. 22-26.

3. W. Elliot Brownlee and Mary M. Brownlee, ed., *Women in the American Economy* (paperback, New Haven, 1976) p. 201. Excerpt is from Van Vorst and Van Vorst, *The Woman Who Toils*, pp. 31-32, 52-53.

4. Dorothy Richardson, *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl* in *Women at Work*, ed. by William L. O'Neill (1905; paperback reprint, New York, 1972) p. 69.

5. Ibid., p. 102.

6. Ibid., pp. 104-106.

7. Ibid., p. 181.

8. Ibid., p. 240.

9. Ibid., p. 243.

10. Wertheimer, *We Were There*, p. 196.

11. Nancy Cott, ed., *Root of Bitterness* (paperback, New York, 1972) p. 332.

12. Louis Levine (Lorwin), *The Women's Garment Workers* (New York, 1924) p. 154.

13. Wertheimer, *We Were There*, p. 306. Excerpt is from Theresa Malkiel, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* (New York, 1910) pp. 40-41.

14. Mary Heaton Vorse, *A Footnote to Folly* (New York, 1935) p. 39.

15. Leon Stein, *The Triangle Fire* (Philadelphia and New York, 1962) p. 146.

16. Rose Schneiderman with Lucy Goldthwaite, *All for One* (New York, 1967) pp. 100-101.

17. Wertheimer, *We Were There*, p. 325.

18. Ibid., p. 338.

19. Mary Harris Jones, *The Autobiography of Mother Jones*, ed. Mary Field Parton (1925; paperback, Chicago, third edition revised, 1976) p. 35.

20. Ibid., p. 119.

21. Ibid., p. 124.

22. Wertheimer, *We Were There*, p. 351. Excerpt is from Edith Fowkes and Joe Glazer, eds., *Songs of Work and Freedom* (Chicago, 1960) pp. 58-59.

23. Jones, *Autobiography*, p. 204.

24. Joyce L. Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (1964; paperback, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1968, 1972) p. 12.

25. Ibid., p. 146.

26. Melvyn Dubovsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the IWW* (Chicago, 1969) p. 180.

27. Ibid., p. 181.

28. Vorse, *A Footnote to Folly*, p. 12.

29. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: An Autobiography*, first published under the title *I Speak My Own Piece* (1955; paperback, revised edition, New York, 1973) p. 132.

30. Vorse, *A Footnote to Folly*, pp. 8-9.

31. Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices*, p. 161.

32. Ibid., pp. 195-196; James Oppenheim, "Bread and Roses."

33. William O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America* (paperback, New York, 1969) pp. 159-160.

34. Wertheimer, *We Were There*, p. 370.

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion

1. Describe some of the conditions endured by women factory workers at the turn of the century. List some of the reasons why women generally worked under worse conditions than men. According to Dorothy Richardson's account, pp. 21-23, what seemed to be the most difficult features of the working woman's life?

2. Discuss the role of women in the Knights of Labor and the early AFL.

3. List the goals of the Women's Trade Union League. Why was the participation of such middle-class reformers as Margaret Dreier Robins so vital to the League? Describe the tactics of the League during a strike. Was the League successful in training working women to be leaders? In unionizing masses of women workers?

4. Briefly explain the importance of each of the following episodes in the history of women's participation in the labor movement:
   1) the shirtwaist makers' strike of 1909-10, sometimes known as the "uprising of 20,000"
   2) the Triangle fire, 1911
   3) the strike of workers in the men's garment trades, Chicago, 1910

5. Describe the tactics of Mother Jones in organizing miners and their wives. Which episode involving Mother Jones was most memorable to you? Why?

6. The Lawrence strike of 1912 caught the public imagination. Discuss the events of the strike, the kind of workers involved and the type of leadership. What were some of the reasons for the successful outcome? Why was the Lawrence strike important in the history of women in the labor movement?

Optional Activity

As a class or committee project, prepare an exhibit on factory life and the labor movement at the turn of the century. The exhibit or presentation can have three parts:

1) Photographs: There is an abundance of photographs available depicting factory workers at the turn of the century. Many were taken by socially concerned photographers--Lewis Hine, Jacob Riis, Jessie Tarbox Beals--who hoped their pictures would alert the public and legislators to the conditions endured by factory workers, especially women and children. Do photo research in books, libraries, museums and historical societies, and prepare a display of women at work.

2) Read a primary source account of life in the factory, such as Dorothy Richardson's The Long Day or Bessie and Marie Van Vorst's The Woman Who Toils (see Bibliography). Select passages that would be suitable to accompany the photographs above.

3) Prepare a presentation of Labor songs.
Sources: Songs of Work and Freedom, edited by Edith Fowkes and Joe Glazer, Roosevelt University Press, 1960.
American Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century, edited by Philip Foner, University of Illinois, 1975.
American Folksongs of Protest, edited by John Greenway, University of Pennsylvania, 1953.
Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology, edited by Joyce Kornbluh (see Bibliography).

CHAPTER THREE

HOW WOMEN WON THE VOTE

PART I. DECADES OF STRUGGLE AND ARGUMENT

American women were granted the right to vote in 1920 by the Nineteenth Amendment to the federal Constitution. This was the outcome of a struggle that lasted over fifty years, during which women who wanted the vote created organizations and used a variety of educational and political strategies to win male voters and legislators to their cause.

The suffrage movement grew out of the 19th century women's rights movement, commonly dated from 1848, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and several other women organized a convention at Seneca Falls, New York, to protest the legal, social and political inequality of women. There Stanton read aloud a Declaration of Sentiments, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, which contained a series of demands, including one for the vote. At the time this seemed so daring that it did not receive a unanimous vote at the convention. However, from that time on, the demand for the ballot became part of women's drive for equality, including advanced education, better jobs and improved legal status.

In the decade before the Civil War, the movement for women's rights was closely linked to the one against slavery, and the outstanding women's rights leaders--Elizabeth Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone--were also abolitionists. During the Civil War, they devoted themselves to the war effort and to the emancipation of the slaves, hoping to be rewarded by receiving the vote when the freed slaves did. But when the time came, Republican Party leaders insisted that it was the "Negro's hour," not the women's. Stanton and Anthony were dismayed that the Fourteenth Amendment, which ensured voting rights for black men, inserted the word "male" in the Constitution for the first time. Fearful that this would set back the cause of women, they refused to support the amendment. In so doing, they broke with fellow suffragists like Lucy Stone who supported it in spite of their disappointment.

The issue, among others, of support for the Fourteenth Amendment, as well as strong personality differences, divided the suffragists. In 1869, two suffrage organizations came into being: The National Woman Suffrage Association, headed by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the American Woman Suffrage Association, headed by Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe and others. The two organizations went their separate ways for twenty years. During that time, the suffrage movement became thoroughly respectable, and its aims narrowed from a wide concern with the problems of women to the single goal of winning the vote. By and large, the women attracted to suffrage work were white, American born, middle class, educated and professional. They did not question the basic structure of American society. Many of them belonged to women's clubs and temperance groups, and through these organizations were developing an interest in suffrage.

The changes that were taking place in American society after the Civil War contributed to a growing conservatism among women in the suffrage movement. It was the era in which giant industries developed, millions of immigrants began to arrive from Southern and Eastern Europe and from Asia, and the modern city with its crowded slums came into being. There was growing social tension as the gap widened between rich and poor. Many of the wealthy, educated women who were joining the movement grew to resent the fact that uneducated, non-English-speaking immigrant men were granted the right to vote while they were denied it. To make matters worse, these immigrant voters could be manipulated by the political party machines into opposing women's suffrage.

By 1890, time had blurred the differences in attitudes and methods and age had mellowed the leaders of the two suffrage organizations, and they merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Although Elizabeth Stanton was elected president of NAWSA in that year, her period of active leadership in the suffrage movement was at an end. For over forty years she had been its writer and philosopher. She believed that many changes in society besides suffrage were needed to enable women to fulfill themselves. Many of her unconventional views, particularly her attacks on the Bible for its supposed contempt of women, shocked many of the members of the NAWSA. In 1892, Stanton resigned, and was succeeded in the presidency by her lifelong friend and fellow pioneer, Susan B. Anthony. Unlike Stanton, Anthony believed that the ballot was the key to women's emancipation.

How many American women were active suffragists? One historian of the suffrage movement, Aileen Kraditor, suggests that we will never know exactly because the local chapters of NAWSA were extremely lax about sending money and reports to the national organization. Judging from random remarks by the leaders, one might infer "that the NAWSA grew from 13,150 in 1893; to 17,000 in 1905; to 45,500 in 1907; to over 75,000 in 1910; to 100,000 in 1915; to 2,000,000 in 1917." However, she warns that such figures should be viewed with caution, since for many women membership in a suffrage club was a mere formality. On the other hand, there were undoubtedly many women sympathetic to the cause who never joined a club.[1]

STRATEGIES: FEDERAL AMENDMENT VS. STATE REFERENDUMS

There were two possible routes to suffrage, both of them difficult. One was to aim directly for a nationwide victory by working for a women's suffrage amendment to the federal Constitution. The other was a state-by-state route, in which the movement would seek amendments to state constitutions by separate referendums. Beginning in the 1860's, suffragists had tried both approaches. The National Association under Stanton and Anthony favored the federal amendment approach, while the American Association under Lucy Stone was partial to the state-by-state route.

A women's suffrage amendment had first been proposed in Congress in 1868. Ten years later, a California senator introduced the measure that came to be called the "Anthony Amendment." It read: "The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." The bill was reintroduced at each session of Congress and committee hearings were held on it during the 1880's. Stanton and Anthony purposely held the conventions of the National Association in Washington to coincide with the hearings in order to educate Congressmen and Senators on the merits of suffrage. Finally, the bill was debated on the Senate floor in 1887 and voted down; it was not brought to a vote in the House. Congressional interest in the bill declined during the 1890's and committee reports on it stopped in 1896. Between 1896 and 1913, the movement for a federal amendment seemed dead.

Although the state referendum route may have seemed more realistic than the federal amendment one, it proved to be incredibly difficult, costly and frustrating. Starting with an unsuccessful campaign in Kansas in 1867, the suffragists were to conduct fifty-six state referendum campaigns between 1867 and 1918, most of which ended in defeat. They were usually held in western states with scattered populations and immense distances between towns. The campaigning was carried on by a small band of devoted workers composed of local people and leading suffragists from the outside. Working with very little money, the suffragists organized meetings with speakers in churches, barns and cabins and distributed their newspapers and pamphlets. During the first Kansas referendum, the eastern suffragists had more than a taste of rugged pioneer life. To visit small settlements beyond the reach of the railroads, for example, Stanton traveled by mule-drawn carriage in territory where there were no roads or guideposts. She and her companions often rode in the dark. They lived on dried herring, crackers, grease-soaked bacon and other frontier specialties, and spent the night in primitive dwellings with bedbugs and mice. One night, Stanton later recalled, she chose to sleep in the carriage instead of indoors with the bedbugs, only to be wakened in the night by a group of long-nosed black pigs noisily scratching themselves on the steps of the carriage.

A state referendum campaign in South Dakota in 1890 provides another example of the frustrations endured by the suffragists, and shows how little progress had been made in the twenty-three years since Kansas. The newly merged NAWSA decided to undertake the South Dakota campaign because they had been promised the endorsement of the Knights of Labor and the Farmers' Alliance. Prominent suffrage speakers came to the state in the summer and fall of 1890, including Susan B. Anthony, then seventy years old; Henry Blackwell, the husband of Lucy Stone; and Carrie Chapman Catt, then a young organizer for the NAWSA. Local suffrage workers organized suffrage clubs in schoolhouses and held rallies. Though there were no funds to start with, $5,500 was raised during the campaign and most of the workers paid their own expenses. During one of the hottest summers on record, the speakers traveled many miles to reach more than one meeting in a single day. Traveling and living conditions in the new state were primitive. And it was all for nothing.

The Knights of Labor and the Farmers' Alliance disappointed the women by forming a third party which refused to adopt a suffrage plank. The women were opposed by immigrants, liquor dealers and gamblers, as well as by organized antisuffrage workers from Massachusetts. After a bitterly fought contest, suffrage lost by a margin of two to one.

Despite all the effort, only two states adopted women's suffrage by state referendum before 1910: Colorado in 1893 and Idaho in 1896. Two other western states were added to the "suffrage column" without a referendum struggle. Wyoming, which as a territory had granted its women the vote as early as 1869, was admitted to the United States as an equal suffrage state in 1890. And neighboring Utah, which had granted its women the vote in 1870, was admitted as an equal suffrage state in 1896. These frontier states tended to be less tradition bound than the East and the South. Women were still scarce there, and shared equally in the hardships of pioneer life. The economic equality between the sexes natural to the frontier situation probably influenced some western men to favor giving women the vote. But the eastern states, both North and South, remained immovable.

Until about 1910, suffrage activity was largely educational. Since women were politically powerless, except in a few states, they had to use arguments to persuade male voters and legislators to give them the vote. They hadn't yet been able to make suffrage into an issue that politicians had to worry about.

THE ARGUMENTS

The Case for Women's Suffrage

The earliest arguments in favor of suffrage were the arguments from justice--women should get the vote because it is right. The suffragists simply took the concepts of natural rights found in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and applied them to women: women are created equal to men and are also citizens subject to the laws and to taxation; therefore, they should have the right to vote.

But toward the end of the 19th century, the suffragists began to shift from arguments based on justice to claims that suffrage would accomplish certain practical results, whether just or not. By the 1890's, some of them came up with arguments that, unfortunately, played upon the fear and dislike felt by many white, middle-class, native-born Americans toward the growing immigrant population and black people. Those suffragists who shared these prejudices argued that suffrage would enable the white middle classes to outnumber what they called the "unfit" voters at the polls. Some of them, including even longtime activists like Stanton, began calling for an educational requirement for the ballot, which would have the effect of giving the vote to educated women and taking it away from members of minority groups. Although most of the leading suffragists did not

personally hold racist views, they were willing to tolerate them in order not to alienate the white southern women who were becoming increasingly active in the movement. Black women interested in suffrage tended to form their own clubs and carry on separate activities. Although they appeared at NAWSA conventions as delegates, their views, especially if they criticized the South on the race question, were generally regarded as offensive to the white southern women, and voted down.

On the other hand, the suffragists found growing links with the cause of reform. Their hostility toward the foreign immigrants in the big cities gradually changed to sympathy when reform ideas began to have political importance. In the years between 1890 and 1920, many middle-class men and women became active reformers in response to the plight of the immigrants in the factories and the urban slums, and to the corruption of city governments. Many of the women active in reform were active in the suffrage cause as well. Jane Addams, the founder of Chicago's Hull-House, one of the first settlement houses, and Florence Kelley, factory inspector and champion of protective legislation for women and children, wanted women to have the vote in order to promote reform goals. They were sure that the immigrants could be persuaded to support women's suffrage if they could be shown that the middle-class suffragists were sympathetic to their needs and would help to advance their interests if they got the vote.

In this period many reformers argued that if women got the ballot they would help end corruption in government, be in the forefront of the fight for social welfare and help pass protective legislation for women in factories. Some of these arguments stressed sex differences: women were equal to men, yet they also had unique qualities which especially fitted them to participate in the bettering of government. For example, Jane Addams argued at a suffrage convention that city government was an extension of housekeeping, and as such was sorely in need of women's special talents. In a complex industrial society, she insisted, a woman had to become interested in such problems as sanitation and sewage, the health of clothing workers, and the purity of food and water, because such matters affected the well-being of her own household. And since these "housekeeping" functions were now carried out by city governments, women had a right, indeed, a duty, to participate in government. As a result of arguments like these, women's suffrage became a plank in the Progressive Party platform, and in the period between 1912 and 1914, the suffragists scored gains in states like Illinois, where the Progressives were strong.

Suffragists sometimes made exaggerated predictions of what women would accomplish once they had the vote. They would end war, defeat the political machines and prohibit alcoholic beverages. The following item from a women's suffrage journal is another example of an exaggerated claim for the power of woman's ballot:

> During the past week several Boston newspapers have given great prominence to the details of a brutal prize fight, accompanying these with the shrill cries of the newsboys,--"All about the prize fight!" If women were voters and had a voice in legislation, this brutal business would be promptly suppressed.[2]

It is not hard to see how arguments and predictions like these would have helped create enemies for women's suffrage.

The Case Against Suffrage

The main arguments of the antisuffragists--or antis--were based on the traditional idea of a woman's place. According to the antis, men and women belonged to two different God-given spheres: men to government and business, women to the home. If women voted and concerned themselves with politics, they would be violating their true nature and the divine order of things. As one senator put it in the debate on the suffrage amendment in 1887:

> For my part I want when I go to my home--when I turn from the arena where man contends with man for what we call the prizes of this paltry world--I want to go back, not to be received in the masculine embrace of some female ward politician, but to the earnest, loving look and touch of a true woman. I want to go back to the jurisdiction of the wife, the mother; and instead of a lecture upon finance or the tariff or the construction of the Constitution, I want those blessed, loving details of domestic life and domestic love.[3]

The antis believed that the basic unit of society was the family and that a woman was adequately protected and represented by her husband. Naturally, this view didn't take into account the many single women who didn't have a man to protect their interests. Many of the antis who feared the poor, the immigrants and black people, argued that giving the vote to women would only increase the "uneducated" vote by adding the votes of women from these groups.

Most of the antisuffrage arguments were used by politicians in debates on suffrage in Congress and in state campaigns. There were also antisuffrage organizations composed of women and headed by wives of wealthy businessmen which became active during state campaigns. The suffragists had good reason to believe that such organizations received money from powerful interest groups. For example, the brewing and liquor interests feared, with some reason, that suffrage would bring the prohibition of alcohol. Big business, already resentful of antitrust legislation, feared that suffrage might bring yet more government regulation of business, especially in the area of woman and child labor. The political machines in the big cities feared that women would be unpredictable as voters and too much inclined toward reform. The South as a region solidly opposed suffrage; black people were being deprived of their voting rights there by state laws, and southern officials feared that women's suffrage, especially by federal amendment, would reopen the question of voting rights and give the federal government power over southern elections. Even the suffragists from the South wanted women to get the vote by state law rather than by federal amendment.

SLOWDOWN IN THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

Between 1896 and 1910 the suffrage movement found itself in what came to be known as its "doldrums." No new state was won in a referendum, and the drive for the federal amendment was at a standstill. The NAWSA had ceased to hold annual conventions in Washington and was doing very little about pushing for a federal amendment, perhaps out of deference to the southern suffragists. Significantly, this was the period when suffragists were most frequently using nativist and racist arguments for their cause. They were probably doomed to failure when they tried to appeal to the most conservative elements in society, because their movement, whatever the arguments they used, represented a broadening of democracy. They were to begin making progress only when they moved from appeals based on fear and prejudice to those based on the hope for social justice, thereby widening their base of support to include reform-minded men, the working class and immigrants.

Another reason why the suffrage movement faltered between 1896 and 1910 was its lack of effective leadership. When Susan B. Anthony retired in 1900 she was succeeded by Carrie Chapman Catt, an able organizer who withdrew for personal reasons in 1902 before she had a chance to make important changes in the sprawling organization. Her successor, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, who held the presidency until 1915, was a gifted woman--a medical doctor and a minister--whose greatest talent was as an orator. But at this moment the NAWSA needed an administrator more than an orator, someone who could unify the organization, plan a grand strategy on state and national levels, and introduce bold new tactics to turn women's suffrage into an urgent political issue.

NOTES

1. Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920* (1965; paperback, New York, 1971) p. 5.

2. Aileen S. Kraditor, ed., *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism* (paperback, New York, 1968) p. 286.

3. Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. IV (1902; reprint, New York, 1969) p. 106.

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion

1. How did the women's suffrage movement originate? Where? When? Who were the leading suffragists for most of the 19th century?

2. What were the two routes to women's suffrage? What were the main difficulties of each?

3. List some of the arguments in favor of women's suffrage. Keep in mind that many of these arguments were used over a long period of time.
   a. Which arguments were the most convincing, in your view?
   b. Which arguments seem to be based on prejudice against Blacks and immigrants?
   c. Which arguments were used by reformers?

4. What were the main arguments against women's suffrage? Read the views of the senator, p. 52. What is his idea of the nature of woman? Who were other powerful opponents of women's suffrage? What were their reasons?

5. Can you account for the fact that the earliest victories for women's suffrage took place in the West?

Optional Activity

Presentation of suffrage songs: The class can learn several suffrage songs as an effective supplement to this chapter. Most songs contain the various arguments for and against women's suffrage. Songs can be found in Songs America Voted By, edited by Irwin Silber, Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1971.

Prosuffrage:

"O, Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" words by L. May Wheeler
"I'm a Suffragette" by Olive Drennan and M.C. Hanford
"The Taxation Tyranny" by General E. Estabrook
"Shoulder to Shoulder" British suffrage song

Antisuffrage:

"Female Suffrage" by Cohen and Phelps

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW WOMEN WON THE VOTE

PART II. DECADE OF VICTORY

FROM EDUCATION TO DIRECT ACTION

The suffrage movement came to life again around the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century. The time for arguments was over. A younger generation brought a new bold spirit and imaginative political techniques into the drive for the vote. The excitement generated by these new forces eventually caused the old National Association--NAWSA--to take a new and purposeful direction.

The first stirrings came at the state level. It was fitting that one of the first women to represent the new spirit was Harriot Stanton Blatch, the daughter of the suffrage pioneer Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Returning to America after many years in England, Blatch immediately recognized that the NAWSA was in a rut, unable to move beyond "education" into political action. In England she had seen the beginnings of militancy in the women's suffrage movement. The English suffragettes held open-air meetings, parades and pageants with colorful banners. They heckled politicians at public meetings and provoked the government into arresting them. Blatch thought that some of these direct-action techniques might be adapted by American suffragists.

In New York in 1907, she founded the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women, whose members included both working and professional women. The League arranged dramatic, open-air meetings--some of them outside factories so that they could reach working men--campaigned against antisuffrage legislators, and fought in Albany for the right of women to poll-watch on election day. It inaugurated festive parades that startled people at first, but soon became a regular feature of suffrage activity.

Many women active in the labor movement joined the League and spoke at its rallies, educating the middle-class suffragists, as well as voters and legislators, to the needs of the working woman. Here, for example is how Rose Schneiderman, an organizer for the garment workers' union responded to a New York state senator who had feared that women would lose their feminine qualities if given the ballot:

> We have women working in the foundries, stripped to the waist, if you please, because of the heat. Yet the Senator says nothing about these women losing their charm. They have got to retain their charm and delicacy, and work in the foundries. Of course you know the reason they are employed in foundries is that they are cheaper and work

> longer hours than men. Women in the laundries, for instance, stand for thirteen and fourteen hours in the terrible steam and heat with their hands in hot starch. Surely these women won't lose any more of their beauty and charm by putting a ballot in a ballot box once a year than they are likely to lose standing in foundries or laundries all year round. There is no harder contest than the contest for bread, let me tell you that.[1]

The growing solidarity of women of all classes could be seen in the suffrage parades. A correspondent from Baltimore wrote back to his paper from New York in 1912:

> Women who usually see Fifth Avenue through the polished window of their limousines...strode steadily side by side with pale-faced, thin-bodied girls from the sweltering sweat shops of the East Side. Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont walked but a few steps ahead of Rebecca Goldstein, who runs a sewing machine in a shirtwaist shop.[2]

In New York and other large cities, new suffrage clubs and parties were formed, some connected with the NAWSA. Their members were organized by election district, a method of organization that had been introduced by the League. Common to political parties, it enabled the suffragists to reach large numbers of voters personally, in order to build broad public support.

Although much of this new activity taking place in the East would bear fruit some years later, the next state victories for suffrage took place in the West. A victory in Washington in 1910 was the first in fourteen years, and gave suffragists the courage to undertake new referendum campaigns. California was won in 1911 in a close and costly campaign to which women from other states contributed money and labor. Victories in Arizona, Kansas and Oregon followed in 1912. An important breakthrough occurred in 1913 when Illinois became the first state east of the Mississippi to grant suffrage, although it was only partial--the right to vote in presidential elections. The Illinois victory clearly owed a great deal to the Progressive Party, which was strong in the state, and to the Chicago reformers who conducted a thoroughly professional campaign. Two more underpopulated western states, Montana and Nevada, adopted equal suffrage in 1914.

Gradually, a constituency of women voters was growing that candidates for political office could no longer ignore. Along with the victories, however, came defeats in Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio. More women were attracted to the cause, but were recognizing that the state-by-state approach was becoming hopeless. The time was ripe to renew the drive for the federal amendment.

THE MILITANTS AND ALICE PAUL

In 1912 the drive for the "Anthony Amendment" had seemed dead. In 1913 it was alive and kicking again. A small group of young women, who found they had no faith in the polite approach to obtaining the vote, were responsible for this dramatic turnabout. Like Harriot Blatch, these women were inspired by the English suffrage struggle. Their leader was Alice Paul (1885-1977), a well-educated young social worker of Quaker background who had gone to prison with English suffragettes. Paul was eager to use methods of direct action similar to theirs in the United States. She and her friend Lucy Burns got themselves appointed to the Congressional Committee of the NAWSA and went to Washington in January 1913, to agitate for the federal amendment. Working with a few other women, their first act was to organize a suffrage parade of 5,000 women on March 3, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, when Washington would be filled with visitors. "Where are the people?" the President asked when he arrived and found no crowds greeting him. "On the Avenue watching the suffragists parade," was the reply.

Although they had a permit and their demonstration was peaceful, a hostile crowd tried to disrupt them and the police offered them no protection. The story made front-page news across the country and suddenly the suffrage issue was back on the map.

In April Alice Paul and Lucy Burns formed a new organization within the National Association, called the Congressional Union, for the single purpose of pushing for the federal amendment. By 1914, the new group had split away from the NAWSA after sharp disagreements over tactics, and each organization was to pursue a different route to the same final goal. Whereas the NAWSA was a rather loosely organized federation of suffrage clubs including many inactive members, the Congressional Union (CU) was a tightly-knit, disciplined army, in which every member was ready to work day and night for the cause. Though she had many interests, Alice Paul chose to concentrate all her energy and talents on the single goal of achieving suffrage, and she inspired others to work as hard as she did. Her power to awaken the spirit of activism and revolt in her followers is expressed in this statement by Doris Stevens, one of her lieutenants:

> Those who had a taste of begging under the old regime and who abandoned it for demanding, know how fine and strong a thing it is to realize that you must take what is yours and not waste your energy proving that you are or will some day be worthy of a gift of power from our masters. On that glad day of discovery you have first freed yourself to fight for freedom. Alice Paul gave to thousands of women the essence of freedom.[3]

The Congressional Union under Alice Paul had two major strategies. The first was to stage spectacular events--parades, marches, pickets--to dramatize women's desire for suffrage. The second was to hold the "party in power"--

the Democrats and President Wilson--responsible for not passing the amendment. Alice Paul wanted to mobilize women in the equal suffrage states to vote against all Democratic candidates as a protest that could force all candidates to take the women's vote seriously. In the Congressional elections of 1914 and 1916, her group--now called the Woman's Party--actively campaigned in the West against all Democrats, including those who happened to be prosuffrage. This tactic of blaming the party in power--a tactic borrowed from the British--angered many Democrats. The NAWSA leaders strongly criticized the Woman's Party, insisting that the suffrage issue cut across party lines.

Although the Woman's Party claimed the credit for defeating a number of Democrats in the West and reducing President Wilson's margin of victory in 1916, the final results remain unclear. There was no way of distinguishing between the votes of men and women and the major campaign issue was the world war. However, the Woman's Party did receive much publicity as a result, and many new women were attracted into suffrage work. The western campaign of 1916 even produced a martyr for the cause--Inez Milholland. Well-educated, a lawyer, an eager crusader for many reforms, Inez Milholland had created a sensation in 1913 when she appeared in a New York suffrage parade dressed in white and riding a white horse. Despite poor health, she undertook a strenuous speaking tour as part of the Woman's Party campaign, and collapsed while speaking in Los Angeles, where she died some weeks later at the age of thirty. Reportedly, her last words before she fell to the platform were "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" At memorial meetings throughout the country, processions of women and girls clad in white carried banners honoring Inez Milholland. A mountain in the Adirondacks was renamed Mt. Inez. A group of over three hundred women visited the President to urge him to exert his influence over Congress in behalf of women's suffrage so that Inez Milholland would not have died in vain.

The day after this visit to the President, the Woman's Party began what was to become its best-known action. Starting on January 10, 1917, it posted a line of pickets--"silent sentinels"--around the White House carrying white, purple and gold banners bearing the slogans "Mr. President, What Will You Do for Woman Suffrage?" and "How Long Must Women Wait for Liberty?" Picketing the White House was a new tactic, but at first the women were treated courteously by the President; the police were neutral. For about three months, as they picketed day after day in all weather, the crowds were generally friendly.

The mood changed, however, after the United States entered World War I and patriotic feelings were running high. The women continued picketing, and took note of the war in their banners with such slogans as "Democracy Should Begin at Home," which pointed to the inconsistency between America's crusade for democracy in Europe and the denial of it to women at home. Such slogans were particularly embarrassing when foreign ambassadors were visiting the White House. The crowds were becoming angrier.

Finally, one day in June 1917, when envoys from Russia, where the Czar had just been overthrown, were greeted with banners saying that America was not a democracy compared to "free Russia," violence erupted. Unrestrained by the police, crowds of angry men, including soldiers in uniform, tried to interfere with the pickets and caused a near riot in front of the White House. Warned that they would be arrested even though they were breaking no law, the women continued their daily picketing. The police began arresting them on charges of "obstructing traffic" and continued to do so throughout the summer and fall of 1917, as more and more women persisted in picketing. The slogans on their banners remained as provocative as ever: one referred to the President as "Kaiser Wilson." At first the charges against the women were dismissed, but soon they were sentenced to terms either in the Occoquan workhouse in Virginia or in the District of Columbia jail.

During the months that the different groups of pickets were held under arrest, stories leaked out about the bad prison conditions: the mingling of healthy prisoners with the diseased, the one bar of soap used in common by all the inmates, the soup or cereal with worms floating on the top, and the brutality. In order to protest the way they were being treated, a number of women, including the leaders, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns, decided on the weapon of the hunger strike, which had been used dramatically in the British suffrage movement. The prison authorities responded by putting the prisoners through the torture of force-feedings. Lucy Burns, one of the women to be force-fed through the nose, recorded the experience in a log kept on tiny scraps of paper and smuggled out of the workhouse:

> I was held down by five people at legs, arms, and head. I refused to open mouth. Dr. Gannon pushed tube up left nostril. I turned and twisted my head all I could, but he managed to push it up. It hurts nose and throat very much and makes nose bleed freely. Tube drawn out covered with blood. Operation leaves one very sick. Food dumped directly into stomach feels like a ball of lead.[4]

The public outcry and the criticism of the government aroused by this episode undoubtedly prompted the release of the women at the end of November. The picketing had lasted ten months. The Woman's Party pickets always claimed afterward that the pressure they exerted was responsible for the progress of the federal amendment by the end of 1917. It is true that in September 1917, while the pickets were still in jail, the Senate Committee on women's suffrage had presented a favorable report and the House had appointed a committee on suffrage. Two weeks after the pickets were released, a date was set to vote on the amendment in the House.

THE NAWSA AND CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT

However, other forces were at work which were equally important in bringing about the final victory. For one thing, the active participation

of thousands of women, including leading suffragists, in war work provided fresh arguments for giving women the vote. Even more important was the work of NAWSA. Carrie Chapman Catt (1859-1947) was drafted to the presidency of the NAWSA in 1915 with a free hand to shape that sprawling organization into a tightly disciplined instrument, with each part ready to play a role in a grand strategy. Catt was the great executive of the suffrage movement. In state referendum campaigns, she had demonstrated her ability to plan ahead, organize down to the last detail, remain flexible and inspire her followers to tireless work. For the final drive she surrounded herself with professionals, women who were ready to work full time for the cause.

When the war broke out Catt pledged the NAWSA's support for the war effort. She insisted that women carry on war work--bond drives, overseas service, food conservation--and suffrage work too. She publicly denounced the Woman's Party pickets, fearing that their militant actions would make all suffragists seem irresponsible and unpatriotic.

In 1916 Catt prepared a "winning plan," designed to achieve the federal amendment within six years. It was followed very closely, although the war speeded up the timetable by two years. In 1917 women won partial suffrage in North Dakota, Ohio, Indiana, Rhode Island, Nebraska, Michigan and Arkansas, the first crack in the solid South. Most important, full suffrage was won in New York after two spectacular campaigns. The New York campaigns of 1915 and 1917 were so effective that they were used as a model by a number of other states. In the 1915 campaign, organized by Catt, the whole state was divided into campaign districts. The suffrage party in New York City attempted to canvass all registered voters, hundreds of its workers climbing up and down tenement stairs ringing doorbells, visiting shops and factories, and calling at suburban homes. They reached 60 percent of the voters and enrolled over 60,000 women in the Woman Suffrage Party, arranged thousands of meetings, distributed leaflets in many languages and presented speeches and slide shows in movie theaters. At night they held torch-light rallies and arranged dances, concerts and block parties in immigrant neighborhoods. Suffrage lost that year, but the campaign had laid the groundwork for the success that would come two years later.

In 1917 the New York suffragists held fewer festive events because of the war, but they were even more thorough in their attempts to reach every possible voter. The suffrage parties enrolled women in war work, offering their organizational resources to the state and city governments. A petition of over a million signatures of women citizens of voting age was obtained to answer the argument "Women do not want the vote." Suffrage won in New York by 102,353 votes, the winning margin supplied by New York City.

The New York victory was a crucial one in the fight for the federal amendment. A decisive number of Congressmen now had women constituents to answer to on the suffrage issue. When Congress reconvened in December 1917, the House scheduled a vote on the Anthony amendment for January 10, 1918.

The measure squeaked through with the necessary two-thirds majority: 274-136. Victory seemed around the corner, yet the vote in the Senate did not come up until October 1918, when it was defeated by a count two votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

Convinced that President Wilson was not doing his utmost to influence the Senate, the Woman's Party lighted "watchfires" in urns in front of the White House and burned the President's speeches on democracy. The NAWSA turned its efforts to winning more states and campaigning against anti-suffrage senators. The amendment met defeat in the Senate once more in February 1919, by one vote, but by this time the women knew that they would have the needed votes in the Sixty-sixth Congress. In May 1919, President Wilson called a special session of Congress and sent a cable from Paris to both Houses urging passage of the Anthony amendment. The measure was quickly repassed in the House by a generous majority. After several days of debate, it passed the Senate on June 4, 1919.

Even in this moment of victory the tired suffragists could not yet rest on their laurels. It was going to take more than another year of organized effort in order to get thirty-six state legislatures to ratify the amendment. State suffrage organizations under the guidance of NAWSA threw themselves into the ratification campaign.

In August 1920, the lower house of the Tennessee legislature became the final battleground. While the suffragists frantically lobbied among the legislators, their opponents fought with every weapon from political threats and bribery to free whiskey. When the showdown vote came the count was tied. At that tense moment twenty-four-year-old Harry Burn, the youngest member of the legislature, remembered his mother's message to him: "Don't forget to be a good boy and help Mrs. Catt put 'Rat' in ratification." He changed his vote to "yes," and Tennessee became the thirty-sixth state to ratify. On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was officially adopted, granting twenty-six million women the right to vote.

NOTES

1. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, pp. 258-259. Excerpt is from "Senators versus Working Women," speech by Rose Schneiderman, March 20, 1912.

2. Ibid., p. 259. Excerpt is from the *Baltimore American*, April 5, 1912.

3. Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom: The Story of the Militant American Suffragist Movement* (1920; paperback reprint, New York, 1976) pp. 13-14.

4. Ibid., pp. 201-202.

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion

1. Describe the ways in which Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women brought new life into the suffrage campaign.

2. Give at least one example of the fact that the revived suffrage movement appealed to women of all social classes. Read aloud Rose Schneiderman's speech, pp. 55-56. Compare her view of feminity with that of the senator in Part One, p. 52. Which argument is more persuasive?

3. How did Alice Paul and her group revive the issue of the federal women's suffrage amendment? List the tactics she used. What were the risks involved?

4. What were the main differences in strategy between the Woman's Party led by Alice Paul and the National American Woman Suffrage Association led by Carrie Chapman Catt? Discuss effectiveness of direct militant action versus traditional polite petitioning and behind-the-scenes diplomacy. In your view, which group contributed more to the final passage of the 19th Amendment?

5. What was the impact of the first World War on the fight for women's suffrage? Did it help or hinder? Explain.

Optional Activity

The fight for the women's suffrage amendment and the current fight for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) bear resemblance in many respects.

1) Consider the arguments used for and against the ERA. Note that ERA opponents like to argue, as the antisuffragists argued, that the amendment would undermine family life.
2) List the groups and well-known individuals that support and those that oppose the ERA.
3) Which states voted not to ratify the ERA? Which states have not yet ratified? Which states have ratified? In which section of the United States is opposition to the amendment strongest?
4) Examine the political strategies of each side and their methods of publicizing their point of view.

For source material on the ERA, use newspapers and magazines as well as printed material made available by pro- and anti-ERA forces.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN IN ARTS AND LETTERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

American women were definitely on the march during the Progressive Era. By 1910 women composed 21 percent of the nation's total work force. There was a rise in the number of women in factory jobs and in office and sales work. A significant number were obtaining college and graduate degrees and entering the male-dominated professions. Masses of middle-class women were being mobilized by the women's clubs and suffrage organizations for the final battle to win the vote. A remarkable group of women were pioneering in the field of social work in the big cities, and women were beginning to be seen and heard in the growing trade union movement. There was much talk in the air of the "new woman"--the educated young single woman in rebellion against the exclusively domestic role of the 19th century woman. Not surprising, this was an era in which women made important contributions to America's cultural life in social thought, journalism, literature, painting and photography, the performing arts and motion pictures. They did so as professionals, not amateurs.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Feminist Thinker

One woman who rejoiced in the progress of women on all fronts, regarding such progress as the natural result of "social revolution," was Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935), whose work as a writer and lecturer wove a vital feminist thread into the fabric of Progressive social thought. She explored the problem of achieving full equality for women by analyzing the economic basis of the relations between the sexes.

Today feminist thinkers trying to account for the persistence of women's second-class status despite equal suffrage and substantial educational and employment opportunities are finding that Charlotte Perkins Gilman was there before them in grasping that woman's subordination was tied to her domestic role--her economic dependence on men. Although Gilman's writings, particularly Women and Economics, her best-known book, have a scientific ring, they grew out of painful life experiences. The gift for preaching and the zeal to reorganize society were in Charlotte Perkins' blood. Her father, Frederic Perkins, was a grandson of Lyman Beecher, the famous preacher; Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catharine Beecher were her great-aunts. Despite such an impressive family line, Charlotte Perkins did not enjoy a sheltered or even secure childhood. After fathering four children, of whom two, Charlotte and a brother, survived, Frederic Perkins deserted the family and his wife eventually secured a divorce. Charlotte Perkins' mother was devoted to her children but avoided showing them affection, hoping that they would not suffer from the lack of it as she had. In one of the most heart-breaking passages of her autobiography, The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, she recalls that since her mother caressed her only when she was asleep, she would keep herself awake and pretend to be sleeping so that her mother would embrace her.

Her autobiography describes other consequences of poverty: constant moves, including stays with relatives and one stint of "cooperative housekeeping" with three other families; hand-me-down clothing that she learned to make over for her own comfort; and only bits and pieces of formal schooling. For the most part Gilman educated herself, following a demanding course of reading in history and science prescribed by her librarian father. In 1879 she attended the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, which provided enough training for her to earn money as a commercial artist. In an effort to strengthen her body as well as her mind, she became a physical fitness fanatic, regularly doing calisthenics, running and acrobatics. By a similar force of will, as well as self-denial, she tried to develop admirable character traits such as thoughtfulness.

Gilman's carefully "handmade character" came apart at the seams shortly after her marriage in 1884 to Charles Walter Stetson, a painter. Although she was in love with Stetson, she fell into a depression which only deepened when a daughter was born. "Here was a charming home," she wrote, "a loving and devoted husband; an exquisite baby, healthy, intelligent and good; a highly competent mother to run things; a wholly satisfactory servant--and I lay all day on the lounge and cried."[1]

A trip to California alone rapidly restored Gilman's spirits, but on her return to her family the depression returned. The advice of a prominent specialist in nervous diseases--"Have your child with you all the time...And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live"--drove her to the edge of insanity, a condition she later depicted in a short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper."[2] She eventually persuaded her reluctant husband that only a separation would save her, and in 1890 she left for California with her child to start an independent new life.

On her own, with her daughter and soon her mother to support, Gilman began a career as a writer and lecturer, at times even keeping a boarding-house to make ends meet. When Charles Stetson, from whom she was divorced in 1894, married her closest friend, she not only gave her blessing to the marriage, but soon sent her daughter east to live with the couple.

> Since her second mother was fully as good as the first...Since the father longed for his child and had a right to some of her society; and since the child had a right to know and love her father--I did not mean her to suffer the losses of my youth--this seemed the right thing to do. No one suffered from it but myself.[3]

For this sensible though unconventional decision, she was criticized in the press as a woman who had given up her husband and child. In 1900 she was married again--to a first cousin, George Houghton Gilman--and was able to make a home again for her daughter. Rational to the last, Charlotte Gilman arranged for her own death when she became aware that she had incurable cancer. She collected enough chloroform to end her life so as not to be a burden to her family.

Gilman's many books, articles, poems, stories and lectures gradually earned her fame, but not much money. She was in demand as a speaker at suffrage meetings, though she regarded suffrage as but one aspect of women's emancipation. After meeting Elizabety Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, she felt a "connection with a splendid period of real heroism." At the invitation of Jane Addams, she spent time as a resident at Hull-House as well as another Chicago settlement. Those she met at the settlement houses kindled her interest in the new field of sociology.

In 1898 Gilman published Women and Economics, the book that was to make her famous in the United States and Europe. Like other works of social thought during the Progressive Era, Women and Economics shows the strong influence of Darwin's theory of evolution. Gilman makes frequent analogies between the behavior of animals and human beings. In her view, the social roles of men and women were not fixed and unchanging, but rather were the product of social evolution and capable of changing still further in the future. She argued that the economic dependence of women on men--the simple fact that man is woman's food supply--was at the bottom of sexual inequality. As a result of the "sexuo-economic" bond between women and men, women developed the traits--mainly sexual attractiveness--considered most useful in winning a husband and failed to develop other, strictly human qualities, such as intelligence and physical strength.

Gilman believed that women needed to have worthwhile work outside the home for their own good and that of society. If women were the economic equals of men, only then could there be truly successful marriages:

> Marriage is not perfect unless it is between class equals. There is no equality in class between those who do their share in the world's work in the largest, newest, highest ways, and those who do theirs in the smallest, oldest, lowest ways.[4]

In her witty attack on domesticity, one of the most striking features of Women and Economics, Gilman seems like a feminist of the 1970's. She argued persuasively against the claim often made by suffragists that traditional marriage was an economic partnership, with women earning their support by house service--cooking, cleaning and child care--by pointing out that poor women "who do the most work, get the least money" and "the women who have the most money do the least work." In other words, a woman's economic status depended completely on the income of the man she was married to, not on the extent of her work at home.

Moreover, the "domestic economy," she repeatedly pointed out, was the most wasteful method imaginable of feeding, clothing and cleaning humanity, second only to each individual doing everything for her or himself. She also attacked what she called the "beloved dogma of the maternal instinct," the notion that the "mother, by virtue of being a mother is supposed to know just what is right for her children." She insisted that reason, not instinct,

must guide parents, and that child rearing was a task to be shared with teachers, doctors, nurses and other child-care specialists, not to mention fathers. In her view, mothers with education and a knowledge of the world outside the home had more to offer a child than a mother confined to domestic tasks.

Charlotte Gilman realized that economic independence for women would require radical changes:

> Economic independence for women necessarily involves a change in the home and family relation. But, if that change is for the advantage of individual and race, we need not fear it. It does not involve a change in the marriage relation except in withdrawing the element of economic dependence, nor in the relation of mother to child save to improve it. But it does involve the exercise of human faculty in women, in social service and exchange rather than in domestic service solely. This will of course require the introduction of some other form of living than that which now obtains. It will render impossible the present method of feeding the world by means of millions of private servants and bringing up children by the same hand.[5]

Gilman offered several practical solutions to the ever-present problem of housework:

> If there should be built and opened in any of our large cities today a commodious and well-served apartment house for professional women with families, it would be filled at once. The apartments would be without kitchens; but there would be a kitchen belonging to the house from which meals could be served to the families in their rooms or in a common dining room, as preferred. It would be a home where the cleaning was done by efficient workers, not hired separately by the families, but engaged by the manager of the establishment; and a roof garden, day nursery and kindergarten, under well-trained professional nurses and teachers would insure proper care of the children.[6]

Many of the ideas in Women and Economics were further expanded in other books--The Home and Human Work. From 1909 to 1916, Gilman published a small monthly magazine, The Forerunner, written entirely by herself, each issue containing an installment of a novel, a book published serially, a short story, articles, humor, book reviews and comments on current events--an astonishing feat of one-woman journalism.

Popular as Gilman was in her own time, her ideas had little practical influence, and were quite forgotten once suffrage had been won and the feminist movement declined. Feminists today have rediscovered her, and are finding many of her ideas applicable to comtemporary women's problems. Looked at together, Gilman's life and work reflect an optimistic belief in progress and in the capacity of all human beings for growth.

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Ida Tarbell: "Muckraking" Journalist

Ida M. Tarbell (1857-1944), who had a career as a journalist, historian and lecturer that Charlotte Gilman would have applauded, started out in life as a feminist and ended up opposing suffrage. Born on a farm in Erie County, Pennsylvania, she spent much of her childhood in Titusville, Pennsylvania, where her father manufactured wooden tanks for the use of the booming new oil industry. As a young woman, Ida Tarbell was influenced by women's rights leaders such as Frances Willard, the temperance advocate, to view marriage as a trap and education as a passport to a freer life. She was one of five women students to attend Allegheny College, where she received a bachelor's degree in 1880.

Tarbell did her first writing for the magazine of the Chautauqua movement, an educational enterprise which sent lecturers into rural communities and had developed a home study program. During the 1890's she went to Paris with plans to study the role of women in the French Revolution at the Sorbonne. To support herself, she began to write for American magazines such as Scribners. Her articles caught the attention of S.S. McClure, a publisher who was just starting a new magazine, McClure's, destined to become one of the liveliest and most influential mass circulation magazines of the era.

A new era of journalism had begun in the 1890's, with S.S. McClure an outstanding example of the new breed of publisher--business-minded, more interested in news than in literature, seeking a mass audience in the increasing numbers of city dwellers. After publishing a number of Tarbell's articles from Paris, McClure, a shrewd judge of talent, invited her to join the magazine's staff. A series she wrote on Napoleon was immensely popular, and when published in book form as A Short Life of Napoleon Bonaparte (1895) sold 100,000 copies and made her famous. Other biographies followed, including one of Abraham Lincoln, that continued to boost McClure's circulation and her own reputation.

Tarbell's career as a muckraker began when McClure chose her to do a series of articles on the development of the Standard Oil Trust because she "had lived for years in the heart of the oil region of Pennsylvania and had seen the development of the Standard Oil Trust at first hand."[7] Not only was she familiar with the oil fields around Titusville from her childhood, but she had seen the independent oil producers, including her own father, ruined by the manipulation of Standard Oil. Although she tried to remain objective, the series, begun in 1902 after two years of careful research, was sharply critical of the company and its controlling stockholder, John

D. Rockefeller, for securing secret railroad rate agreements which enabled Standard Oil to maintain an advantage over the smaller producers. The series, published in book form as The History of the Standard Oil Company, (1904), was a sensation and assured Tarbell a wide market for her future books.

The Standard Oil series was among the first that touched off the "muckraking" movement in which Tarbell and other writers, such as Lincoln Steffens and Upton Sinclair, exposed corruption in politics and industry. Although McClure and other publishers may not have started out with the intention of exposing corruption, the enthusiastic public response to such material prompted them to seek out more industries and more city governments to expose.

In his autobiography, Lincoln Steffens provided a description of the effect of the calm, sensible and thoroughly professional Tarbell on the short tempers of her male colleagues. Steffens was in the middle of an argument with McClure:

> The disagreement became acute; it divided the office and might have caused trouble had not Miss Ida M. Tarbell made peace, as she so often did thereafter. Sensible, capable, and very affectionate, she knew each one of us and all our idiosyncrasies and troubles. She had none of her own so far as we ever heard. When we were deadlocked we might each of us send for her, and down she would come to the office, smiling, like a tall good-looking young mother, to say, "hush, children." She would pick out the sense in each of our contentions, and putting them together with her own good sense, give me a victory over S.S., him a triumph over Phillips, and take away from all of us only the privilege of gloating. The interest of the magazine was pointed out, and we and she went back to work.[8]

In 1906, Tarbell, Steffens and other colleagues left McClure's to purchase the American Magazine which they edited as a team. In another series of articles criticizing big business, called The Tariff in Our Times, Tarbell argued that the high protective tariff was used by the trusts to gain control of an industry. One wonders how she reacted to President Woodrow Wilson's comment on this series: "She has written more good sense, good plain common sense, about the tariff than any man I know of."

Yet Ida Tarbell was not comfortable with the label of "muckraker." Although personal experience had caused her to be critical of Standard Oil, she was not as hostile to business as some of her fellow journalists. In later articles she praised the efforts of certain business people to introduce "scientific management" and she wrote two admiring biographies of business leaders.

After leaving the American magazine in 1915, Ida Tarbell enjoyed a busy career as a lecturer on business and international affairs well into the

1930's. As evidence of the high regard in which she was held by those in power, as well as the unusual range of her interests, she was chosen to serve--along with suffragists Carrie Chapman Catt and Anna Howard Shaw--on the Woman's Committee of the U.S. Council for National Defense during World War I; and she was a delegate to President Wilson's Industrial Conference in 1919 and to President Harding's Conference on Unemployment in 1921.

A woman who had made it in a man's world, Ida Tarbell in later life seemed to have rejected the feminism of her youth. She did not support the suffrage movement, predicting that votes for women might cause them to lose the independent power and capacity for innovation they had shown during the Progressive era, a prediction that proved to be correct. In The Business of Being a Woman (1912) she seemed to be accepting traditional sex roles when she declared that "women had a business assigned by nature and society which was of more importance than public life."

Writers of Fiction: Women and Realism, Local Color and Tradition

While a social thinker like Charlotte Gilman examined the shifting roles of men and women in a period of great social change, and pioneer investigative reporters like Ida Tarbell laid bare the anatomy of the giant industries that dominated the age, fiction writers tried to depict realistically a society in flux and to convey the spiritual effects of economic and social changes.

Women were certainly not new to fiction writing. For much of the 19th century, the production of sentimental novels and verse had been the one profitable profession for females. After the Civil War, when realism was becoming the dominant strain in American literature, a number of women emerged as among the most outstanding examples of this literary vein. There was an important difference between the sentimentalists, the most notable of whom was Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the turn-of-the-century storytellers and novelists we are about to discuss. The sentimentalists, as much as they wrote for money and fame, usually declined a professional role and emphasized their homemaking and maternal functions. Their writings were the result of spontaneous outpourings, they claimed, not disciplined craft; and they never let literary pursuits interfere with preparing meals or tending to a sick child. The turn-of-the-century writers, on the other hand, were conscious, disciplined artists, well versed in world literature, and devoted to the highest standards of language and form at a time when much fiction writing was graceless and sloppy.

Some of the realist writers earned a reputation as regionalists, or "local colorists," known for their portrayals of a particular American locale--the South, the Midwest, New England--complete with characters speaking local dialects and with descriptions of landscape and special customs. Although some of the finest women writers in certain respects fell under the category of local color, their best works transcended the limitations

that "local color" implies and spoke to universal human feelings and situations. The work of Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) represents a flowering of a New England local-color tradition begun by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The daughter of a country doctor in South Berwick, Maine, Sarah Orne Jewett accompanied her father on his rounds of this coastal area, with its towns that had seen better days; and she eagerly soaked in the look of the land, its history, the lives of people, their way of talking and the insides of their houses. These early impressions became such an intimate part of her being that when she turned them into literature the result seemed utterly natural and artless. From her first published story (1868), her work won popular acceptance.

Jewett's profound love for her native village and her understanding of its effect on people's lives are plain in The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896), widely regarded as her finest work. In this loosely connected series of sketches, she depicts the often desolate beauty of the rugged Maine landscape and the threadbare yet dignified lives of the mostly elderly men and women of Dunnet Landing, some of whom remember when the Maine coast was a thriving center of shipping and commerce. The narrator, a young woman from the city, is full of admiration for the elderly women, such as the main character, Mrs. Todd, who can cure ailments with herbal remedies, keep a tidy cottage, handle a sailboat in a tricky current, and who has abundant compassion to spare for all her neighbors. Such women as Mrs. Todd and the other super-competent women of Jewett's fiction usually recall that their own mothers and grandmothers were even more competent and energetic, and the book's narrator regrets the loss of a heroic tradition of womanhood. Jewett's elderly heroines, it might be added, are usually widows or unmarried women, generally superior in vigor and intelligence to the few men in their woman's world, more capable of healing than the doctor, more comforting in times of grief than the minister.

Jewett's fiction influenced Mary Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930), who grew up in Massachusetts and Vermont and found a subject for her stories in the decaying New England towns whose ambitious young men had gone to the West or to the big cities. However, Freeman is less nostalgic and less interested in nature than Jewett. She writes about the psychological problems of people, mostly women, whose range of life choices is extremely narrow, and who struggle to realize themselves within the limitations imposed by poverty and inhibiting social customs. In her own life Mary Wilkins experienced the failure in business of her father, and the departure--without a commitment--of a young naval officer with whom she was in love. The heroines of her stories are not young, beautiful, or even very intelligent. Yet they have a strong sense of their own individuality, a fierce desire for independence and a readiness to fight for what they want. Sarah Penn, the heroine of Freeman's best-known story, The Revolt of Mother, stages a successful revolt against her husband after forty years of docility as a farm wife. When her husband builds a handsome barn for the animals instead of a long-promised house, "Mother" takes advantage of her husband's absence to install the family in the new barn. When her husband

easily caves in, she realizes, sadly, that her years of submission were largely self-imposed. Louisa Ellis, the aging woman of A New England Nun, realizes that she is happiest being single and seizes upon the first opportunity to reject her fiancé of many years. Other Freeman heroines choose economic independence over marriage and live satisfying lives without men.

With the works of Kate O'Flaherty Chopin (1851-1904), who like Jewett and Freeman emphasized female characters, we move from the rocky New England landscape and its tight-lipped, raw-boned men and women to the warm, exotic world of New Orleans and its aristocratic Creole society. St. Louis-born Kate O'Flaherty was the daughter of an Irish immigrant who had become successful in business, and a French Creole mother. Well educated at a convent school, she could speak and read French and German and was familiar with contemporary European literature. In 1870 she married Oscar Chopin, a New Orleans cotton broker of Creole background with whom she had six children. Kate Chopin's marriage brought her into the luxurious, tolerant society of New Orleans and the islands in the Gulf of Mexico. The family later lived in the Bayou country of Central Louisiana, where Kate Chopin came in contact with Creoles, Acadians (descendants of French settlers from Canada) and Blacks.

Kate Chopin did not begin to write fiction until she was thirty-seven years old, six years after the death of her husband. In her first story, "Wiser than a God" (1889), a young woman's choice of a career as a pianist causes her to renounce the man she loves. The theme sounded in this story--a woman's need for love and artistic fulfillment, and the possible conflict between the two desires--reappears in many of Chopin's stories.

Taking as her model the French master of the short story Guy de Maupassant, Kate Chopin perfected her craft, learning how to convey a crucial moment or suggest a life history in a few compressed pages. She was appreciated in her time mainly as a local colorist because of her skill in rendering the exotic setting and the language and ways of the folk she encountered in the Bayou country.

In many of Kate Chopin's stories, women are aware of marriage as a kind of cage and seek to break out of it, usually--but not always--to return to their husbands after a period of soul-searching. In her novel The Awakening (1899), a young married woman with two children experiences an awakening in which she begins "to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her." Her husband, a socially ambitious New Orleans businessman, regards his wife as a "valuable piece of personal property." Edna Pointellier's awakening of sexual desire and artistic ambition causes her to shrug off the responsibilities of wife and mother and seek to fulfill herself in love and in art. She eventually drowns herself in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, which had formed the sensuous background of her awakening to life.

When The Awakening first appeared, most critics condemned it as an unhealthy and immoral book, although many admired the refinement and elegance of its style. The public was not ready for such defiance of Victorian morality. Kate Chopin wrote very little else in the few years remaining to her. In our own time, the novel has been rediscovered and appreciated precisely for the psychological frankness which had doomed it as an immoral book in 1899.

Edith Wharton (1862-1937), who found a wider audience for her many novels and tales than Kate Chopin ever did, often portrayed marriage as a trap--for men and women--and portrayed individuals whose deepest desires are thwarted by society's conventions. Wharton's roots were in old New York society, the same world that produced Theodore Roosevelt. However, energetic people like Edith Wharton and Theodore Roosevelt were the exception rather than the rule in this genteel, convention-bound society, whose members "dreaded scandal more than disease, who placed decency above courage, and who considered that nothing was more ill-bred than 'scenes,' except the behavior of those who gave rise to them."[9] It was a world of afternoon calls and tea parties and perfect manners in which "authorship was still regarded as something between a black art and a form of manual labour."[10] Like most of the women of her class, Edith Jones received only a superficial education, and was expected to devote herself to social life and the adornment of the home. Fortunately, her father had a fine library where her literary taste was formed by much childhood reading. At twenty-three, she married Teddy Wharton, a pleasant man of her class, who did not share her artistic interests.

Although Edith Wharton continued to conform to the social rituals of her class, she inwardly rebelled by becoming a writer and making the way of life she had been born into the subject of most of her fiction. By the time she had become an established writer, she liberated herself even further by moving permanently to France, getting divorced and surrounding herself with a circle of friends--such as writer Henry James--who shared her interests.

During her youth Wharton watched her ordered, genteel world, whose members thought it vulgar to mention money, and whose wealth was based on real estate, give way to the rising industrial class--the railroad builders, oil and steel tycoons, and stock manipulators whose fortunes had been made in the West. She watched them building palaces on Fifth Avenue and marrying into the old moneyed families. Some of Wharton's best novels depict characters representing the best qualities of Old New York--decency, refinement, honor--crushed by the aggressive commercial spirit.

Lily Bart, the heroine of The House of Mirth (1905), Wharton's first major novel, is a fashionable but penniless beauty, whose refinement and sense of honor prevent her from taking any of the "vulgar" steps, such as marrying for money, necessary for her to survive in the only society she knows. The society that has produced her also destroys her. (As her fortunes take a downward swing, she dies of an overdose of a sleeping potion.)

Through the sad fate of Lily, Edith Wharton seems to be criticizing the status of women in her society: raised to be ornamental--flowerlike--they are helpless to control their own destinies, completely subject to the whims of men.

Wharton's most famous novel, Ethan Frome (1911), set in a bleak New England village rather than fashionable New York, deals with a sensitive man trapped in a loveless marriage. In The Age of Innocence (1920), written in a postwar mood of nostalgia for the lost New York world of her youth, Edith Wharton portrays a man who, loyal to the moral code of his world, renounces the passionate woman he loves and remains locked in a conventional marriage. This beautifully polished novel, in which the author made peace with the narrow world from which she had escaped, won her the Pulitzer Prize in 1921.

It could be argued that Edith Wharton's inbred good taste, combined with her increasing remoteness from America, caused her to see only vulgarity and coarseness in American life rather than vitality and promise. In The Custom of the Country (1913) and many of her postwar novels, she depicts newly rich social climbers from the Midwest with open scorn.

Another major woman novelist who scorned American commercialism and championed more traditional values was Willa Cather (1873-1947), best known for her novels and stories celebrating the Nebraska frontier. The Virginia valley where Willa Cather was born was as deeply rooted in the past as Edith Wharton's New York. When Cather was nine, however, her father moved the family to the pioneer community of Webster County, Nebraska, an experience of uprootedness from a settled world that she would retain all her life. She roamed the untamed prairie, with its long, waving red grasses, visiting the sod houses of her neighbors, mostly uprooted Europeans--Bohemians, Swedes, Germans, Russians--hopefully building new lives out of the rugged soil.

It took Willa Cather many years before she was able to transform these vivid impressions of her pioneer childhood into enduring fiction. Her apprenticeship was varied: she earned a degree from the University of Nebraska, wrote countless music and theater reviews as well as short stories, edited a "family" magazine in Pittsburgh, taught Latin for a few years at a high school in that city, and published a volume of verse and a book of tales. S.S. McClure, in the process of assembling a new staff for his magazine after Ida Tarbell and others had departed, spotted Willa Cather as a rising literary talent and invited her to join the new staff. From 1908 to 1912, she served as managing editor of McClure's, living the exciting life of a successful journalist, but finding little time to devote to her fiction. It was Sarah Orne Jewett, whose writings Cather admired and with whom she formed a friendship during this period, who urged her to leave the exciting but hectic world of journalism. "You must find your own quiet centre of life," she wrote Cather, "and write from that to the world...in short, you must write to the human heart, the great consciousness that all humanity goes to make up."[11]

In 1912, Willa Cather left magazine editing for good. A trip to the Southwest and a return visit to Nebraska stimulated her to write the first of her Nebraska novels, O Pioneers! (1913). From then on her devotion to the art of fiction never wavered. O Pioneers! and My Antonia (1918) express Cather's nostalgic love for the prairie landscape and her admiration for the bold pioneer spirit embodied in her immigrant heroines, Alexandra Bergson and Antonia Shimerda. Alexandra Bergson joyfully assumes from her dying father the responsibility for taming the wild land:

> For the first time, perhaps, since that land emerged from the waters of geologic ages, a human face was set toward it with love and yearning....The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.

Whereas Alexandra finds fulfillment in her victory over the land, Antonia finds hers in motherhood. At the end of My Antonia she is seen surrounded by her many children, battered by life's struggles but still radiant, "a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races." In Willa Cather's view, the pioneer women shared some of the traits of the creative artist--imagination, energy, and drive. In The Song of the Lark (1915), the story of a Swedish immigrant's triumphant struggle to become an opera singer, Cather endows her heroine, Thea Kronberg, with a pioneer childhood strongly resembling her own, and with her own hard-won insights into the nature of artistic achievement. Thea's artistic success is earned at the expense of personal relationships. Willa Cather firmly believed that the creation of great art demanded sacrifice and was rarely compatible with marriage and family life. She herself never married.

In One of Ours (1922), a war novel which won the Pulitzer Prize, and A Lost Lady (1923) Willa Cather mourned the passing of the pioneer virtues of courage and vision and criticized the vulgar, mean-spirited money grubbing that now seemed to her to dominate American Life. In Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927), dealing with the missionary work of two French bishops in the American Southwest of 1848, and Shadows on the Rock (1931), set in 17th century Quebec, Willa Cather turned her back on a present that repelled her, and found serenity in recreating historical periods when traditional faith and simple heroism prevailed.

Ellen Glasgow (1873-1945), like Willa Cather, had roots in traditional Virginia society. She began her literary career by being sharply critical of the aristocratic southerner's tendency to dwell in a romantic past. In her early novels she attempted to portray lowly born but energetic heroes who would rejuvenate the worn-out South. She also made fun of the code of southern womanhood, which allowed women to be brought up in ignorance and resulted in loveless marriages in which both partners treated each other politely, but avoided real communication.

Ellen Glasgow believed in the strength of women. In her novel Barren Ground (1925) the heroine, Dorinda Oakley, triumphs over a man who has betrayed her by rec'aiming her family's large but barren acreage. As she

finds strength in hard work and communion with the land, her weak former lover succumbs to alcoholism. Like Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow could write from the inside about the ways in which traditional upper-class society stunts the lives of its women. When she turned to other social levels, she was able, like Jewett, Freeman and Cather, to create sturdy, self-sufficient women, unafraid of struggle and capable of living without men.

Of all the writers mentioned here, only Ellen Glasgow participated in the organized women's movement. By her own account one of the first women in Virginia to publicly support votes for women, Glasgow and her sister organized the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia in 1909.

American Women Painters: Mary Cassatt and Others

In the visual arts, greater numbers of women than ever before worked against difficult odds to become professionals rather than "ladylike dabblers." Young women were admitted to art schools such as the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, but were not afforded the same opportunities as male students. For example, women had to fight for access to life drawing classes using female nude models, and it took much longer before they were allowed to draw the male nude. Considering the discriminatory attitudes, women had to be remarkably persistent in order to become merely competent and have professional careers. In view of these problems, the career of Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), widely recognized as one of the most outstanding and original of American painters--male or female--seems almost miraculous. It is perhaps significant that she lived most of her adult life in France, receiving recognition as an artist there before she did so in America.

Mary Cassatt was by no means the first, nor the last American painter to find Europe, especially France and Italy, a more congenial place than America to develop as an artist. Earlier in the 19th century there were women as well as men among the artists who flocked to Rome to study sculpture. Two who achieved recognition for their work in Europe and America were Harriet Hosmer (1830-1908) and Edmonia Lewis (1845-1909). Hosmer, a Massachusetts-born woman, early in life rejected the passive woman's role; her favorite subjects for sculpture were historical or mythological women who had resisted masculine domination or had suffered from it. Lewis was a half-black, half-Indian woman who had grown up among the Chippewa Indians of New York State; she chose subjects--groups of freed slaves, Indians, suffering women--that reflected her triple identification with oppressed groups.

Pennsylvania-born Mary Cassatt, like other painters of her generation, came from a well-to-do family with the leisure to travel. The daughter of a banker and broker, she spent part of her childhood in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, but by the time she was seven years old had lived with her family in France and Germany. The vivid scenes of Paris and other European

cities undoubtedly stimulated her to pursue the study of art. She began her training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where the course of instruction consisted chiefly of drawing from plaster casts and copying paintings. Though not a particularly inspiring course, Cassatt did graduate from it with proficiency in drawing and with a sense of the discipline necessary to become an artist.

When she announced her intention to become an artist, her father was said to have remarked, "I'd rather see you dead." However, he did not otherwise stand in the way of her career. In 1866, she went to Europe for further study, like so many art students of the day, studying the old masters in Italy, Holland and Spain. By the early 1870's her paintings were being accepted by the Paris Salon, the art "establishment" of the time. Despite this official acceptance, Mary Cassatt began to be attracted to the work of a new group of independent artists who called themselves the Impressionists. Edgar Degas, one of the foremost members of this group, admired Mary Cassatt's paintings and invited her to exhibit with them. Years later she told her biographer: "At last I could work with absolute independence without considering the opinion of a jury...I admired Manet, Courbet, Degas. I hated conventional art--I began to live."[12]

Although Mary Cassatt's style was always her own, she shared with the Impressionists the distinctive qualities that made their art seem so new: the light palette that rendered the natural light of day, the visible brush stroke, and subject matter drawn from everyday life rather than from history or the Bible. Some of Mary Cassatt's finest paintings are casual portraits of women sitting at the opera, having tea or reading a newspaper in a living room. At Degas' suggestion, she specialized in painting mothers and children, bringing to this theme a fresh, intimate treatment, expressive without being sentimental.

Like many of the other Impressionists, Mary Cassatt was strongly influenced by Japanese prints. This influence is most evident in the colors, sense of line and diagonal composition, and flatness of a series of aquatints completed in 1891, which are regarded as among Cassatt's finest, most original work.

As Mary Cassatt's reputation grew as a result of her showings with the Impressionists, she was invited to send paintings to exhibitions in America. As a result of her own struggle for success in a demanding career, she was sympathetic to the women's cause. Although she usually detested commissions, she was gratified to be invited to contribute mural paintings to the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. Mary Cassatt also played a significant role in introducing French Impressionist art to the United States. As an art advisor to members of her family and to wealthy American collectors, she was personally responsible for some of the outstanding collections of Impressionist and other European art now available to the public in American museums.

While Mary Cassatt was undoubtedly the most original American painter of her time, several of her female contemporaries produced outstanding work in a more conservative style that has fallen out of favor in the 20th century. In their own time, however, such artists as Maria Oakey Dewing (1845-1927), Lilla Cabot Perry (1848?-1933) and Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942) were honored in America with prizes, commissions and one-woman shows. All three women came from middle-class, cultivated homes and had the opportunity for both academic study and European travel. Maria Oakey Dewing, who received encouragement from her artist husband and from the artistic circles to which they belonged, specialized in still-life paintings of flowers which were noted for both scientific accuracy and lyrical beauty. Lilla Cabot Perry, who was personally acquainted with Claude Monet, painted landscapes and portraits that bore some of the characteristics of Impressionist art. Cecilia Beaux, whose work shows the influence of both the old masters and the Impressionists, was extremely successful as a portrait painter, receiving commissions from prominent people such as Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt. Her work has been justly compared with that of her better-known contemporary, John Singer Sargent. These women painters and others are finally being "rediscovered," as art historians explore previously neglected periods of American art and women's contributions to them.

Women Pioneers in Photography

At the end of the 19th century technical developments--such as the manufacture of dry plates--were taking place in the field of photography that would make it the hobby or vocation of more and more people. It was the period in which both documentary and art photography emerged. A number of remarkable women were to be found among turn-of-the-century photographers, even though photography was still an unusual activity for a woman because the equipment--box cameras, tripods, glass plates--was heavy and because there were mechanical details to be mastered in both picture taking and developing. Two of the women discussed in this section, Gertrude Käsebier and Frances Johnston, earned money from their work in photography and were fully recognized in their own day as accomplished professionals. The other two, Alice Austen and Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, pursued photography as a hobby, although with the utmost professional skill and dedication.

Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934) had a pioneer childhood in a Colorado mining town, but came to New York as a teenager. She did not become interested in photography until she was amost forty years old, many years after she had married and had three children. Her interest began in the late 1880's when she went to art school in the hope of becoming a portrait painter. It was in Paris, where she had gone in 1893 to further study painting, that she realized the artistic potential of the camera and decided to devote herself to photography. In the late 1890's, after several months' apprenticeship, Käsebier opened a photographic studio on Fifth Avenue in New York and soon became a well-known portrait photographer. In 1902 she joined Alfred Stieglitz, the famous pioneer photographer, as one of the founders of the Photo-Secession group, an organization which fought for the recognition of photography as a creative art. Her photographs began to be shown in exhibitions and reproduced in popular magazines such as McClure's and Scribners.

Perhaps because of her western origins, Käsebier was fascinated by the American Indian. She executed a notable series of portraits of Indians who were members of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and others of the Plains. She is perhaps best known for an extensive series of photographs of mothers and children. In these beautifully composed and somewhat stylized pictures, Käsebier often used soft-focus effects and romantic lighting, which were meant to evoke an emotional response in the viewer.

Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864-1952), who had considerable financial and artistic success, also did portrait photography--she photographed the Theodore Roosevelts and other eminent people--but was perhaps most outstanding as a documentary photographer. Born in West Virginia, she was well-to-do and well connected and a strong and independent woman. Like Käsebier, she came to an interest in photography from studying painting. She also wrote magazine stories before committing herself to photography. In 1890, when she opened her first studio in Washington, D.C., she was an immediate success. She received commissions from magazines to do photojournalism, such as a picture-story on the Pennsylvania coal fields which could be likened to Ida Tarbell's articles on the oil industry. For news syndicates Johnston covered such events as Admiral George Dewey's triumphal return after the Battle of Manila. She also made a specialty of photographing architecture and different educational systems. One of her most memorable series of photos are of Hampton Institute, the famous training school founded after the Civil War primarily for the education of freed slaves and American Indians. Johnston's extraordinary photos, commissioned by the head of Hampton Institute for exhibition at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900, show the Hampton students in carefully composed, somewhat stiff-looking groups, earnestly at their studies in both academic and manual training classes. We see, for example, young men neatly dressed in uniforms, leaning with pencils poised over mechanical drawing desks; and groups of immaculately dressed young women, in a sewing class or measuring the front lawn with rulers. There is a before-and-after series showing, for example, "The Old-Time Cabin"--a rude, windowless shack--and "A Hampton Graduate's Home"--a neat, white frame house with shutters. Though there is a strange, dreamlike, unspontaneous quality to the Hampton photographs, Frances Johnston has definitely captured the students' hope for a better life to come, and their faith in self-improvement through discipline and hard work.

Unlike Käsebier and Johnston, Alice Austen and Chansonetta Emmons were virtually unrecognized in their own time, except by friends and family; and but for very recent accidents of discovery, their works might have gone unnoticed and even been destroyed. Alice Austen (1866-1952) spent almost her whole life, except for periods of travel, in a fashionable house on New York's Staten Island, overlooking the Narrows. She was from a well-to-do family of old New York stock, and the world she grew up in was similar to the one described in Edith Wharton's novels. Austen became a skilled photographer earlier than any of the other photographers mentioned here. When she was ten, her Uncle Oswald, a sea captain, lent her his bulky wooden box camera and showed her how to use it. She soon learned from another

uncle, a chemistry professor, how to use chemicals to develop the negative images on the dry glass plates. Before long Austen was acquiring her own cameras and lenses and was launched on a lifelong hobby that might very well be called a career, except that she never sold a photograph.

From the 1880's on, Alice Austen was constantly photographing the people, places and pleasant events of her world--her family and friends, the cluttered Victorian rooms of her house, the picnics, parties and pranks. Austen rarely went anywhere without lugging along her photographic equipment, which in those days weighed at least 50 pounds and which included the heavy box cameras, boxes of glass plates and tripod. A strong, energetic woman, Austen excelled in sports, particularly tennis, which was newly popular with women. Many of her photographs show women playing tennis, bicycling and doing gymnastics. Her "ladylike" friends lost their inhibitions in front of her camera. There are pictures of them pretending to get drunk, pretending to smoke cigarettes, kicking up their skirts to reveal their legs, and dressing in men's clothes. By attaching a long rubber cable with a bulb at its end to the shutter, Austen could include herself in many of the group pictures, as well as take self-portraits. She looks out at us, a handsome, well-dressed young woman with an intelligent face and humorous eyes. Although her pictures are straightforward and unsentimental, in sharp detail rather than soft focus, and often full of humor, one senses that Alice Austen was fully aware that she was recording a world that she knew would vanish in her lifetime, as indeed it did.

Austen did not confine herself to photographing her immediate privileged world. She also trained her camera on immigrants and working people on the Lower East Side and in other parts of Manhattan, seeing them as lively and picturesque individuals, not as victims of social injustice. (In this she differed from the important documentary photographers of the time like Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine and Jessie Tarbox Beals.) She photographed major public events such as Admiral Dewey's return from the Philippines and the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Alice Austen's lifework, now a priceless record of social history, might have been lost forever in the financial disaster that overtook her in later years. She lost all her money in the stock market crash of 1929. By 1945 she had lost almost all her belongings, and she had been evicted from the home she had lived in all her life. In 1950, officially a pauper, she was to be found old and ailing in a poorhouse on Staten Island. Fortunately, in 1951, her vast collection of glass plates and negatives, stored at the Staten Island Historical Society, came to the attention of individuals who realized their importance. A selection of her photographs was published in magazines and enough money was earned to rescue Alice Austen from the poorhouse and enable her, in her remaining year, to enjoy recognition as one of America's first and most original women photographers.

Chansonetta Stanley Emmons (1858-1937), like Alice Austen, never made a living from photography, although she did win prizes from camera clubs

and occasionally had her work exhibited. A native of rural Maine, Emmons lived much of her life in the Boston area, but always summered in Maine or other parts of New England. She also traveled to other parts of the United States, including Colorado, Wisconsin and the Carolinas, always taking her camera with her. She had been educated to be a teacher and had some training in art, but was introduced to photography by her brothers, who developed a method of mass-producing dry plates, an invention from which they made a considerable fortune. Left a widow in 1898, with a seven-year-old daughter to support, Emmons could have gone back to teaching, but, supported by her wealthy brothers, chose to devote her time to photography.

The majority of Chansonetta Emmons' photographs are of New England rural life. In a visual manner comparable to the local-color writers like Sarah Orne Jewett or Mary Wilkins Freeman, Emmons preserved a gentle, peaceful and somewhat austere way of life that was dying out. She captured groups of somber, thin-lipped village women sewing in their rocking chairs in their wallpapered parlors; a blacksmith in his shop in Maine; an old bearded farmer husking corn; and an old woman spinning wool. Many photographs feature children feeding the animals on a farm, standing outside a country schoolhouse or amusing themselves as best they can with makeshift toys, as they might be doing in a Winslow Homer painting. Her photos of women in Vermont kitchens, with their pots and kettles and gleaming iron stoves, vividly convey the quality of rural women's lives in that period. Emmons made two trips to the Carolinas in 1897 and 1926, and photographed poor black people living in rural areas on or near the old plantations. In her southern photos she caught the dignity, beauty and individuality of the people, as well as the grim details which reveal the stark poverty of the region.

A New England Composer: Amy Beach

In the field of music a significant number of women rose to success as performers--mainly pianists, violinists and vocalists. The years between 1890 and 1920 were a golden age of opera in which legendary singers like Lillian Nordica, Mary Garden and Olive Fremstad captured the imagination of the press and the public. (Willa Cather based the heroine of her novel The Song of the Lark partly on Olive Fremstad.)

During the same period, however, only one woman, Amy Beach (1867-1944), became a symphonic composer. Her achievements as a pioneer woman composer are all the more remarkable when one realizes that before the late 19th century there were hardly any American composers of classical music--male or female. Beach belonged to the first generation of full-fledged classical composers in America. Most of the members of the group came from New England, making that region the center of musical creativity in America.

Musical talent frequently runs in families and shows itself early in life. Beach, born Amy Cheney, was composing simple waltzes by the time she was four, encouraged by her mother, a singer and pianist. She received

piano instruction, as well as a year of music theory, but had no training in composition. She made her debut as a pianist in Boston in 1883, and was soon performing as a soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

After her marriage two years later, when she was eighteen, to Dr. H.H.A. Beach, a surgeon 24 years her senior, she appeared less frequently in concerts, but began, with her husband's encouragement, to study composition on her own. Beach's first major work, a Mass in E Flat, performed by the Handel and Haydn Society with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1892, established her reputation as the foremost American woman composer. (Like some well-known actresses of the time, Amy Beach preferred to use her husband's name and was known professionally as Mrs. H.H.A. Beach.) Women suffragists, in recognition of her achievement, commissioned Beach to write a work to be played at the dedication of the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Thus the women's exhibit, with its murals by Mary Cassatt, and its Festival Jubilate for Chorus and Orchestra by Beach, appropriately featured the works of America's most gifted woman painter and composer.

Other large works by Beach include her Gaelic Symphony (1896) and a piano concerto (1900), which she herself performed with the Boston Symphony. She also wrote a variety of smaller works, including chamber music, piano pieces, church music and songs. In its strong melodic line and lyrical feeling, Beach's work was typical of the late romantic music so popular at the turn of the century.

Beach's creative genius flowered in a sheltered family circle rather than in lonely, independent struggle. Her natural gifts for melody and musical structure were nurtured first by her mother, then by her husband. Neither financial hardship nor the cares of raising children ever stood in the way of her creative development.

Pioneer of Modern Dance: Isadora Duncan

Most of the artists discussed in this chapter were rooted in the 19th century, though their lives reached into the 20th. Isadora Duncan (1878-1927), on the other hand, seems to belong totally to the 20th century. Her rebellious attitudes toward art and life were formed during a rootless and unconventional childhood in California. Her parents were divorced shortly after her birth in San Francisco. While their mother earned a meager living giving music lessons, Duncan and her brothers and sister were left to do as they pleased. Duncan was teaching dance to neighborhood children by the time she was six, and at age ten was earning money from her dancing classes. Her mother's antireligious views and contempt for material possessions also influenced the children to be independent spirits.

Isadora Duncan spent most of her teenaged years as a dancer with various theatrical companies, learning to be a performer, but disliking the kind of dancing she had to do. Traditional ballet pleased her no better when

she tried it briefly. By the age of twenty, she was in New York developing her own style of dance and beginning to give solo performances in the homes of the wealthy, impressing her audiences with her grace and beauty as she danced her natural, expressive movements while wearing free-flowing garments.

Duncan soon found an even wider and more receptive audience for her dances in Europe, as well as inspiration for her work in art, in particular the art of ancient Greece. She rejected what she regarded as the mechanical motions of traditional ballet for dance movements based on nature, art and human emotions. She choreographed her dances to the music of composers like Beethoven and Wagner rather than to second-rate dance music. Beginning in 1902, she danced in theaters throughout Europe, dazzling audiences and winning the admiration and friendship of leading artistic and theatrical personalities.

Isadora Duncan's life was as unconventional as her art. She opposed marriage, but glorified motherhood, bearing three children out of wedlock by three different fathers. Tragically, her first two children were drowned in 1913 when the car in which they were riding with their nurse rolled into the Seine; and a third died at birth. Desolate with grief, Duncan resumed her dancing and teaching, her suffering only adding a further dimension to her art.

To her disappointment, Duncan was never welcomed back wholeheartedly to her native land. On her American tours only a small group of New York artists and writers greeted her with enthusiasm. Her emancipated personal life, which perhaps was part of her attraction in Europe, was still too shocking for puritanical Americans.

Throughout her career, Isadora Duncan continued to teach dancing, making several efforts, all of them unsuccessful, to found dancing schools with government support in different countries so that she could train a whole younger generation in the principles of free movement. It was with a sense of herself as a revolutionary spirit that she tried to found such a school in Russia in the early 1920's, but the Soviet government soon withdrew its support. Despite the financial failure of her schools, she was successful in gathering around her a number of younger disciples, some of whom took her name.

Isadora Duncan's death in 1927 in Nice, France, was as dramatic as her life. Moments after stepping into a sports car, her long fringed scarf caught in the spokes of the wire wheels and broke her neck. Few American women of her generation were ready to live as freely as Isadora Duncan, but her legend lived on--in her autobiography, in photographs, in the memories of those who had seen her dance. She belongs to a small gallery of American women--Frances Wright, Margaret Fuller, Victoria Woodhull, and Emma Goldman come to mind--who risked scandalizing the American public in order to live as free women. With her independent views, dedication to art, personal standards of morality, natural movements and loosely fitted clothing, Duncan represents the 20th century woman exuberantly casting off the fetters of the Victorian age.

Women in the Early Motion Picture Industry: Alice Guy Blaché

While Isadora Duncan was in her heyday, the 20th century art of motion pictures was in its infancy, although she refused to have her dancing recorded in the new medium, preferring to be remembered as legend. But if Duncan, pioneer of modern dance, refused to be a pioneer of cinema, a surprising number of women flocked to the new industry that was half art, half technology. Today, when women are still encountering difficulties breaking into the film industry, it is astonishing to discover that in the era of silent films, which lasted from the first decade of the century through most of the 1920's, women were active not only as actresses, but as screenwriters, publicists, film editors, producers and directors.

The very first woman film director, indeed one of the very first directors of either sex, was French-born Alice Guy Blaché (1875-1968). In 1890, Alice Guy started out as a secretary for Leon Gaumont, a French film pioneer and manufacturer of motion picture equipment; by 1896, she had written, photographed and directed her first film short, The Cabbage Fairy. In 1907, a newly married Alice Guy Blaché came to the United States, where her husband opened a New York office of the Gaumont Company. After a short spell as a homemaker, during which she gave birth to a daughter, Blaché returned to filmmaking in 1910, founding the Solax Company of which she was the president and chief director. The Solax studios were located first in Flushing, New York, and later in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

From 1910 to 1914, Blaché directed or supervised the direction of around three hundred films, many of them one-reelers, made at the rate of two a week. When the company eventually folded, she directed films for other companies. Although hardly any of her films survive today for us to judge, those who reviewed them in motion picture journals praised them for their skillful storytelling techniques, tender sentiment and artistic charm. One viewer of some of the surviving one-reelers now in the Library of Congress noted their "remarkable sophistication in storytelling" and "amusing satire."[13]

As for Blaché's personal qualities as a director, a stage actress, Olga Petrova, has left a detailed portrait of her on the set:

> ...Madame Blaché vocally outlined what each episode was about with words and action--pantomime--appropriate to the situation....If the first or second rehearsal pleased her, even though a player might intentionally or not alter her instructions, as long as they didn't hurt the scene, even possibly improve it, she would allow this to pass. If not, she would rehearse and rehearse until they did before calling "camera." When she had cause to correct a player she would do this courteously...She never bellowed through a megaphone as I was told many another director was wont to do. She obtained her results earning the respect and obedience of her artists.[14]

Alice Guy Blaché's last film was made in 1920, after which she returned to France. She unsuccessfully tried to return to filmmaking in the late 1920's. That she was fully conscious of her role as a pioneer woman in the industry is plain from an article titled "Woman's Place in Photoplay," which might well be taken to heart by aspiring women film artists today:

> It has long been a source of wonder to me that many women have not seized upon the wonderful opportunity offered to them by motion picture art to make their way to fame and fortune as producers of photodramas. Of all the arts there is probably none in which they can make such splendid use of talents so much more natural to a woman than to a man and so necessary to its perfection.
>
> ...In the arts of acting, music, painting and literature, woman has long held her place among the most successful workers, and when it is considered how vitally all of these arts enter into the production of motion pictures, one wonders why the names of scores of women are not found among the successful creators of photodrama offerings.
>
> There is nothing connected with the staging of a motion picture that a woman cannot do as easily as a man, and there is no reason why she cannot completely master every technicality of the art. The technique of the drama has been mastered by so many women that it is considered as much her field as a man's and its adaptation to picture work in no way removes it from her sphere. The technique of motion picture photography, like the technique of drama is fitted to a woman's activities.[15]

NOTES

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* (1935; paperback, New York, 1975) p. 89.

2. Ibid., p. 96.

3. Ibid., p. 163.

4. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1898; paperback, New York, 1966) p. 220.

5. Ibid., p. 210.

6. Ibid., p. 242.

7. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (paperback, New York, 1955) p. 193. Quotation is from S.S. McClure, *My Autobiography* (New York, 1914) p. 238.

8. Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York, 1931) pp. 392-393.

9. Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920; paperback, New York, 1962) p. 266.

10. Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance: The Autobiography of Edith Wharton* (1933; New York, 1964) p. 69.

11. James Woodress, *Willa Cather: Her Life and Art* (1970; paperback, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1975) p. 133.

12. Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (New York, 1977) p. 58.

13. Anthony Slide, *Early Women Directors: Their Role in the Development of the Silent Cinema* (New York and London, 1977) p. 23.

14. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

15. Ibid., p. 32. Excerpt is from Alice Blaché, "Woman's Place in Photoplay Production," *The Moving Picture World* (July 11, 1914).

Questions for Inquiry and Discussion

1. What events in the early life of Charlotte Perkins Gilman contributed to the breakdown of her first marriage and to the development of her feminist philosophy? According to Gilman in Women and Economics, what was at the root of the inequality of the sexes?

2. Read Gilman's solutions to the problems of housework, p. 66, and remember that these suggestions were advanced over 75 years ago. Have any of them come to pass in the United States? Are you in favor of any of them? Why or why not?

3. In your view, what was Ida Tarbell's most impressive achievement? Why?

4. The great women fiction writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were all in some way preservers of either local color or tradition. Explain this statement with reference to at least one of the writers mentioned in this chapter.

5. What were the obstacles confronting women who aspired to be painters and sculptors in the 19th century? The women who became professional painters--Mary Cassatt, Cecilia Beaux, Maria Oakey Dewing--came from similar backgrounds. What circumstances of their early lives provided encouragement for their artistic ambitions?

6. What interested you most about the pioneer women photographers and film director?

Optional Activity

Do an independent study project on at least one woman in the arts from the period discussed in this book.
Suggested topics:

1) Pioneer modern dancers: Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham
2) Women pioneers of photography: Alice Austen, Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, Jessie Tarbox Beals, Frances B. Johnston, Gertrude Kasebier, Doris Ulmann
3) Painters: Mary Cassatt, Lilla Cabot Perry, Maria Oakey Dewing, Cecilia Beaux (Try to see their works firsthand in art museums, or, if that is not possible, find reproductions of their works in books.)
4) Fiction writers: Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin

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